Commentary
June 2000

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A world of ideas on public policy.

The Unintended Consequences of Price Controls

By John E. Calfee

The United States is the only OECD country that does not impose some form of price controls on prescription drugs, and some American policymakers argue that their country should adopt this approach as well. The question that must be considered is: what is the effect of such controls? In a new study for the American Enterprise Institute, I examined the potential impact of controls on a number of factors, ranging from investment in innovation to consumer access to new therapies. The evidence suggests that price controls on prescription drugs would have some significant unintended consequences. Despite the apparent popularity of price controls, the potential harms from controls are far more varied and extensive than most people realize, mainly because those harms are either difficult to predict in advance or are hidden from view once they occur.

First, there is the effect on investment in research and development. Advocates of price controls often say they wish to establish "reasonable" pharmaceutical prices or profits without impeding the development of useful new pharmaceuticals. This is a well-meaning sentiment, but it leads down an extremely dangerous path. No one can know what would be a "reasonable" reward for solving research problems that have remained unsolved for decades. Who knows how much a breast cancer cure is worth, and what it will cost? Yet that is precisely what firms have to know or at least they have to know what the government will later determine to be a reasonable level of profits for breakthrough drugs yet to be developed. Pharmaceutical firms facing price controls would be reluctant to gamble a billion dollars in a highly uncertain search for a breast cancer cure because they would believe that, if and when they were to beat the long odds against success, a government agency might decide that the drug's price is too high.

It is true that some price control regimes attempt to set higher prices for more innovative drugs. However, that approach requires price controllers to outguess the market in deciding which research areas are most promising and which new types of drugs would be most useful an impossible task, because regulators cannot possibly have access to as much information, as quickly, as a free market could generate. The astonishing pace of innovation in contemporary pharmaceutical research makes the regulator's task even more difficult.

Price control regimes also fail to reward further discovery as to the value of existing therapies. Fixed prices ignore the costs and benefits of new research on old drugs. Such remarkable successes as the statin-class cholesterol-reducing drugs and the clotbuster tPA, found some of their most important uses as a result of large-scale clinical trials executed by their manufacturers after the drugs were already in use.

Second, there is the impact on competition. Wherever there are price controls, powerful parties learn to work the controls system to their advantage and the disadvantage of competitors. Pharmaceutical price controls in Japan and to a lesser extent in France are designed in part to protect domestic pharmaceutical manufacturers at the expense of foreign competitors, without regard to the relative value of the products being marketed. These arrangements work to the disadvantage of consumers, particularly in Japan where many of the most effective drug therapies for cancer, heart disease, and other conditions are simply unavailable.

Even when they are designed to protect local industry, price controls end up crippling domestic companies, by distorting incentives and creating an environment that is unfriendly to companies that pursue risky research in search of breakthrough therapies. In countries ruled by price controls, research by local pharmaceutical companies tends to be curtailed or channeled into lines far less challenging than those that yielded the remarkable advances of the past two decades.

The evidence suggests that price controls on prescription drugs have some significant unintended consequences.

Those harms are largely invisible to the public in these countries. Worse, price controls systems tend to persist, despite their destructive consequences, because pharmaceutical firms, healthcare providers and healthcare funding agencies can learn to live with and even benefit from a system that reliably protects profits and discourages new entrants, while assuring stability in prices and expenditures. Meanwhile, cutting edge scientists and venture capital quietly retrench in their work on pharmaceuticals for the elderly – to cite one important area – and move on to more profitable arenas.

All this penalizes patients who gain the most from new pharmaceuticals and must therefore lose the most when new drugs fail to appear.

John E. Calfee is a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute (AEI) in Washington, D.C., USA. ***This essay is adapted from his monograph Prices, Markets, and the Pharmaceutical Revolution. To order a copy, please see the AEI website at www.aei.org or call +(202) 862 5800.***

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Letters from Readers

Covenant

To the Editor:

Insofar as Jon D. Levenson's "The New Enemies of Circumcision" [March] touches on my book, *Circumcision: A History of the World's Most Controversial Surgery*, I would like to clarify two points. First, when it comes to the circumcision wars, I am simply a historian—not in any sense the "activist" Mr. Levenson believes me to be. My conclusion that neonatal circumcision lacks a persuasive medical rationale is drawn from analyzing the available evidence. In recent years, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the Canadian Pediatric Society have reached similar conclusions.

Second, and far more outrageous, is Mr. Levenson's claim that he detects in books like mine and Lawrence A. Hoffman's erudite *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* "the whiff of anti-Semitism (and/or Jewish self-hate)." This would be libelous if it were not so absurd. Alas, in light of circumcision's history of stirring passionate controversy, I guess one should expect antagonists to seize any weapon at hand.

David Gollaher
La Jolla, California

To the Editor:

Despite being a lifelong practicing Jew and the mother of a circumcised son, I consider myself a conscientious objector to this observance. As Jews, we would at least like the assurance that we are not engaged in a ritual that is medically unjustified—but, despite Jon D. Levenson's arguments to the contrary, we are.

It is well known that circumcised men can and do contract HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, which means that all men need to practice safe sex regardless of whether they have been circumcised. Urinary tract infections (UTI's) should be treated not by surgery but with antibiotics—as they are in women, who contract UTI's much more often than do men. Renal failure is almost always the result of serious genital anomalies, which may require all sorts of surgical intervention—not merely circumcision. Penile cancer, which appears to be linked to promiscuity, is exceedingly rare. There is, then, little point to Mr. Levenson's contribution to the never-ending search for the medical benefits of circumcision.

What is not discussed in Mr. Levenson's article is our right to bodily integrity. The cavalier attitude toward the removal of the foreskin is based on the widely held belief that it is a "useless flap of skin." But why, then, do we recoil in horror when we hear about female genital mutilation (FGM)? Mr. Levenson invokes all the complications of FGM, but one could argue that they would be greatly reduced if performed in a sterile hospital setting. Would that make it more palatable?

A frank discussion of sexuality and sexual anatomy is necessary in order to have a full understanding of all the issues involved in circumcision, but the taboos surrounding the practice—and anti-Semitic diatribes against it—have made enlightenment difficult to achieve. My hope is that the Jewish people will lead the way in this necessary discussion.

Kayla Hanocka
Norwalk, Connecticut

To the Editor:

Jon D. Levenson digs through 200 pages of excellent scholarship by David Gollaher, looking for something to which he can attach the libel of anti-Semitism. He should learn instead from a much greater scholar, Maimonides, who, though an apologist for Judaism, was not afraid to face the truth.

In his *Guide for the Perplexed*, Maimonides, who was also a great physician, dismisses as absurd any claim of medical benefits for circumcision. Instead, he explains,

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> One of its objects is to limit sexual intercourse, and to weaken the organ of generation as far as possible, and thus cause man to be moderate. . . . The bodily injury caused to that organ is exactly that which is desired; it does not interrupt any vital function, nor does it destroy the power of generation. Circumcision simply counteracts excessive lust; for there is no doubt that circumcision weakens the power of sexual excitement, and sometimes lessens the natural enjoyment.

Moreover, Maimonides goes on to admonish, "No one . . . should circumcise himself or his son for any other reason but pure faith; for circumcision is not like an incision on the leg, or a burning in the arm, but a very difficult operation."

As parents, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, we must ponder Maimonides' words and ask ourselves whether we still have the right to inflict this harmful and anti-sexual surgery on our non-consenting sons, whatever motivation we might claim. This is particularly true when, as Mr. Levenson himself concedes, "All sorts of other practices bearing the warrant of tradition—Sabbath, dietary laws, daily prayer—have fallen by the wayside" for those who feel that the reasons once inspiring them no longer apply in our modern, secular lives.

ARI ZIGHELBOIM
Delgado Community College
New Orleans, Louisiana

TO THE EDITOR:

Like many others, Jon D. Levenson seems to think that cutting off part of a baby's genitals is a practice justified by its antiquity. The great virtue of David Gollaher's book is that it puts this tradition into perspective. Contrary to Mr. Levenson, both medical circumcision and *brit milah* are expressions of parental control, and his defense cannot escape the fact that at the heart of the proceedings there is a helpless baby.

Mr. Levenson writes that "classical Jewish texts value the willingness to suffer for a worthy cause." This is rather different from a willingness to make someone else suffer.

HUGH YOUNG
Pukerua Bay, New Zealand

TO THE EDITOR:

I am a Jewish mother who chose not to have her son circumcised. My research has led me to believe that there are serious if unrecognized physical and psychological effects connected with the procedure.

Jewish mothers report that circumcising their sons forces them, the mothers, to distrust their most basic instinct—to protect their child from harm. Others suffer a sense of loss and an alienation from Judaism because of their doubts about this important Jewish act. As an outspoken enemy of circumcision, I do not feel my opposition represents any "fault line within contemporary Jewry," in Mr. Levenson's words, but rather a traditional Jewish process of reflection and evaluation that could result in a healthy dialogue.

WENDY ZIEVE
Seattle, Washington

TO THE EDITOR:

Jon D. Levenson ably defends circumcision from its philosophical, medical, and moral critics, but I wonder where his heart is. I now have a two-year-old son whom I could not put under the knife even though I am Jewish, live in Israel, and believe in God. As I watch him grow up, I know that this boy is perfect the way he is. Nothing needs to be taken from him—not even a small piece of skin—for him to be the greatest present God has ever given me. Contrary to what Mr. Levenson claims, my son is Jewish regardless of whether he is circumcised—because his mother and I are Jewish, because we teach him Jewish values, and because his grandparents died in Auschwitz.

MARC GELKOPF
Ramat Gan, Israel

TO THE EDITOR:

For the last hundred years, a steady stream of Jewish American doctors has cleverly defended circumcision on medical grounds. The conflict of interest here is glaring. The rabbis give the doctors a wink, secretly pleased by the validation of what otherwise would be perceived as an act of barbarism. The doctors, meanwhile, find one excuse after another to connect their modern obsession with physical hygiene to the Jewish demands for moral hygiene.

The antisexual sentiments expressed by Mr. Levenson in his concluding paragraph, in which he calls for a restoration of the traditional virtues of "sacrifice, discipline, and obedience," hint at an awareness of the sexual pleasure to be had from the foreskin of the penis. Little do today's *mohelim* (ritual circumcisers) know that they are preparing a generation of plaintiffs who will be claiming a loss of sexual pleasure in a class-action lawsuit filed against them.

NORMAN L. COHEN
Birmingham, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

In his essay, Jon D. Levenson makes the following analogy: "To say that a Jewish child will decide whether to fulfill the [commandment of circumcision] himself upon reaching adulthood . . . is like saying that he will at the same point decide what his mother tongue will be." This makes no sense. When it comes to teaching their child the only language that they know and that their neighbors and countrymen speak, most parents have no choice. When it comes to circumcision, all parents have a choice. A mother tongue is a product of the language instinct, a natural human phenomenon; circumcision is an artificial religious marker.

JAMES HOYLE
Rochester, Michigan

TO THE EDITOR:

Jon D. Levenson is to be commended for defending the values of the Jewish covenant with God against the "new enemies of circumcision." I believe, however, that in the process he has misrepresented the position of Reform Judaism. Moreover, in quoting out of context from an article that I wrote almost a decade ago, he has mistakenly suggested that some Reform rabbis protest the practice because of their own "spiritual and moral void."

Here are the rhetorical questions I raised in my article, written after my own son's *brit*: "Had I somehow abandoned [my son in his pain] for the sake of the ceremony? What kept me from aborting the ceremony on his behalf?" Mr. Levenson suggests that "implicitly . . .

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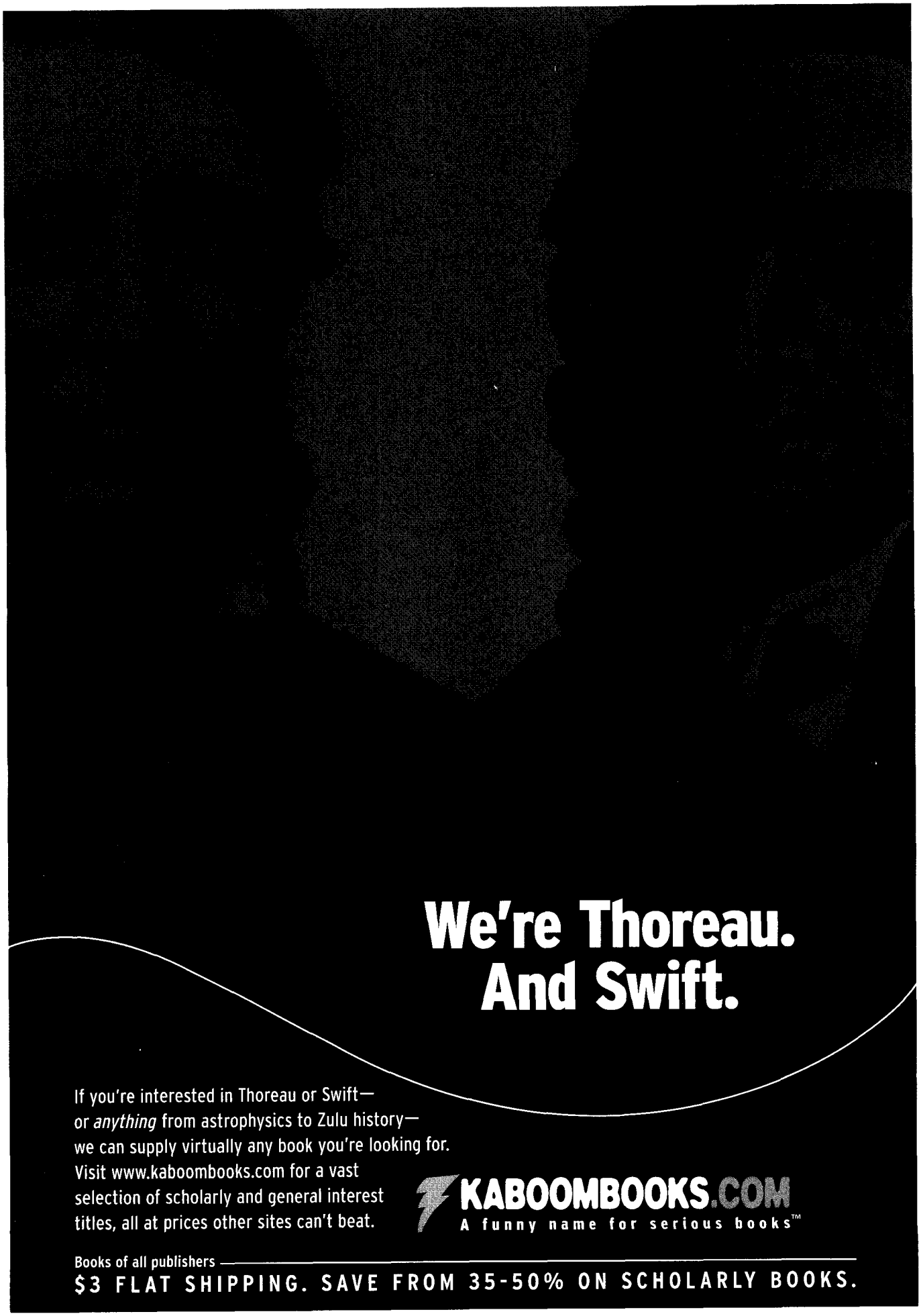
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unanswerable" questions such as mine are meant to undermine the Jewish people's commitment to circumcision. Had he read my entire article, however, he would have found that I discuss several reasons outside the *halakhic* (legal) ones for *preserving* the rite of circumcision—despite the anguish that we parents often experience during the ceremony, and despite the fact that many of us no longer feel that circumcision is a divine imperative.

Thus, for example, I argue from psychoanalytic theory that the parents' psychological ambivalence is an important and indeed profoundly Jewish contribution to the *brit*—a dynamic that might unconsciously commit parents to a heightened sense of compassion and empathy for their children. Furthermore, I suggest that as informed medical consumers, parents should be taking a more active role in minimizing (if not completely eliminating) the child's pain by employing a *mohel* willing to anesthetize the site. Many Reform *mohelim* are now trained in this technique, adopted in some Orthodox circles as well.

While many substantive issues do divide liberal from traditional Judaism, the *brit* should not be included among them. With ample respect to Mr. Levenson's necessary defense of circumcision, he misjudged Reform Judaism's commitment to this life-cycle event.

[RABBI] MICHAEL HERZBRUN
Rochester, New York

TO THE EDITOR:

Jon D. Levenson presents the arguments of a number of anticircumcision advocates and demolishes them all, with the exception of the claim that the procedure inflicts too much pain on the infant.

In the last several years parents have been advised by *mohelim* to apply lidocaine to the penis following the procedure. Even prior to the advent of this medication, however, neurologists assured us that since an infant's nervous system is still undeveloped at eight days, no pain registers in the child's brain. When an infant cries, it is not during the procedure itself but rather at the removal of his diaper.

[RABBI] EUGENE J. COHEN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR:

Jon D. Levenson presents a lucid account of "the new enemies of circumcision." He notes that circumcision reduces the incidence of penile cancer and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. His claim is confirmed by the 1999 edition of *Sexually Transmitted Diseases*:

> The weight of evidence indicates that male circumcision decreases host susceptibility to several sexually transmitted diseases, particularly including chancroid and HIV. . . . [I]t seems inescapable that this is one of the most neglected risk factors in the HIV epidemic in developing countries . . . and more attention to this issue in prevention efforts . . . is urgently needed.

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What is more, there is evidence that female partners of circumcised males show a lower incidence of cervical cancer and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. All this information is important to men's and women's health, but it almost never appears in the media.

A popular radio doctor condemns circumcision and even advises men to have the procedure surgically reversed. Yet the same doctor speaks nonjudgmentally about tattooing and body piercing, despite the risk of transmitting hepatitis and other diseases. A procedure with definite health benefits and minute risks is condemned, while procedures with definite risks and no health benefits are discussed neutrally and evoke no groups intent on putting a stop to them.

Why the difference? Is it a coincidence that the Bible mandates circumcision but forbids tattooing and body piercing? In our haste to destroy the guideposts, especially the religious guideposts, that helped prior generations, we are throwing out the baby with the bathwater.

DAVID C. STOLINSKY, M.D.
Los Angeles, California

JON D. LEVENSON writes:

Having pronounced the medical evidence on neonatal circumcision "stunningly contradictory," as he does at one point in his book, David Gollaher now claims (as he did at another point in his book) that the procedure "lacks a persuasive medical rationale."

Let me go over this ground again. In his book, when Mr. Gollaher evaluates the many studies that speak to the hygienic benefits of circumcision, he demands a high standard of evidence and does what he can to undermine their conclusions—wondering, for example, whether circumcised men are dramatically less likely to be infected with HIV because they "eat different foods than the uncircumcised." When, on the other hand, he confronts anticircumcision claims in the contemporary literature—for example, Ronald Goldman's assertion that circumcision lowers men's self-esteem, makes them avoid intimacy with women, and raises the rate of divorce as well as that of "assault, rape, and murder"—he lets them pass with nary a peep of protest or curiosity as to whether they are supported by any scientific evidence.

In a related vein, when Mr. Gollaher comes across a blatant example of the medieval blood libel, he simply pronounces it an "indication of bizarre practices" among Jews. And yet he now wonders what makes me detect "a whiff of anti-Semitism and/or Jewish self-hate" in the anticircumcision movement.

Why the double standard? Despite Mr. Gollaher's claim that he is a disinterested historian, the conclusion seems inescapable that his own opposition to circumcision has determined how he evaluates evidence. Moreover, given the role that circumcision has played in the history of anti-Semitism, the danger is real that when opponents of circumcision adopt a double standard of the kind I have just described, a revived anti-Semitism will result, whatever the intention. (Contrary to what Mr. Gollaher writes in his letter, I did not charge Lawrence A. Hoffman with anti-Semitism or self-hate.)

Although Kayla Hanocka identifies herself as a practicing Jew, she breaks dramatically with the Jewish tradition by demanding that *brit milah* have a medical justification. (Her assumption that male "bodily integrity" requires the foreskin is also, to put it mildly, not drawn from Judaism.) What is more, her own medical reasoning can be dangerous to health. It is one thing to argue that cost-benefit analysis does not warrant routine neonatal circumcision. It is quite another—and highly inaccu-

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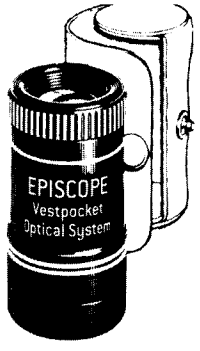

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rate—to claim that the practice has no benefits.

The evidence is that circumcision helps protect against venereal disease; despite this evidence, Kayla Hanocka would have men rely solely upon "safe sex." Studies show that circumcision reduces significantly the rate of urinary-tract infections (UTI's); in the face of these studies, she suggests that such infections "should be treated not by surgery but with antibiotics, as they are in women." But why condemn parents who prefer a more active approach, sparing their sons a potentially dangerous initial infection? If there existed a safe surgical procedure that significantly reduced the rate of UTI in women, and that could be performed on an outpatient basis in a matter of minutes, I suspect that many medical authorities would endorse it enthusiastically.

Finally, Kayla Hanocka's claim that the complications of female genital mutilation (FGM) would be reduced if it were "performed in a sterile hospital setting," though true up to a point, misses the crucial difference between this practice and male circumcision—a common error among anticircumcision partisans. The excision of the clitoris and the narrowing of the vaginal opening are not complications of FGM but usually its very goal. From the standpoint of anatomy, the male equivalent of a clitoridectomy would be not the removal of the foreskin but the amputation of the glans penis.

In the passage from the *Guide for the Perplexed* that Ari Zighelboim excerpts, Maimonides makes the psychological observation (perhaps obsolete today) that only someone acting out of firm religious conviction would undertake circumcision. He is not making a normative statement about who *ought* to do so. Lest readers be misled by Mr. Zighelboim's attempt to enlist Maimonides (of all people) in the campaign against *brit milah*, let me quote from the beginning of his discussion of this topic in his great law code, the *Mishneh Torah*:

> It is the [Jewish] father's obligation to circumcise his son. If the father transgressed . . . and did not circumcise [his son], he has been derelict of a positive commandment . . . and it is the obligation of the rabbinical court to circumcise that son . . . in his proper time. They must not leave any uncircumcised male among the Jewish people. . . . If the matter escaped the attention of the rabbinical court and they did not circumcise him, when he reaches majority, he is obligated to have himself circumcised, and with each day that passes after he has reached majority without his having had himself circumcised, he is derelict of a positive commandment.

Not a lot of ambivalence there.

Contrary to Hugh Young's view, I do not think that the antiquity of *brit milah* is what justifies it. I do believe that responsible parents inevitably make decisions that cause their children pain and that for Jewish parents to decide in favor of the ceremonies required by Jewish law is highly responsible and commendable. I also maintain that those parents, Jewish or gentile, who see the health benefits of circumcision as justifying the practice have a scientific basis for their judgment.

How many Jewish mothers react to *brit milah* as Wendy Zieve reports is unknown. But there has never been a lack of Jewish mothers for whom the *mitzvah* is important—in Hellenistic times, many Jewish mothers chose martyrdom rather than violate this commandment—and these are still the majority. Of course, the validity of the practice is neither disproved nor confirmed by the emotional reaction that people may have to it at the time it is performed, especially if

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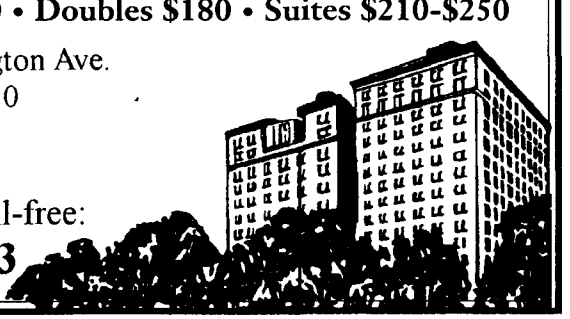

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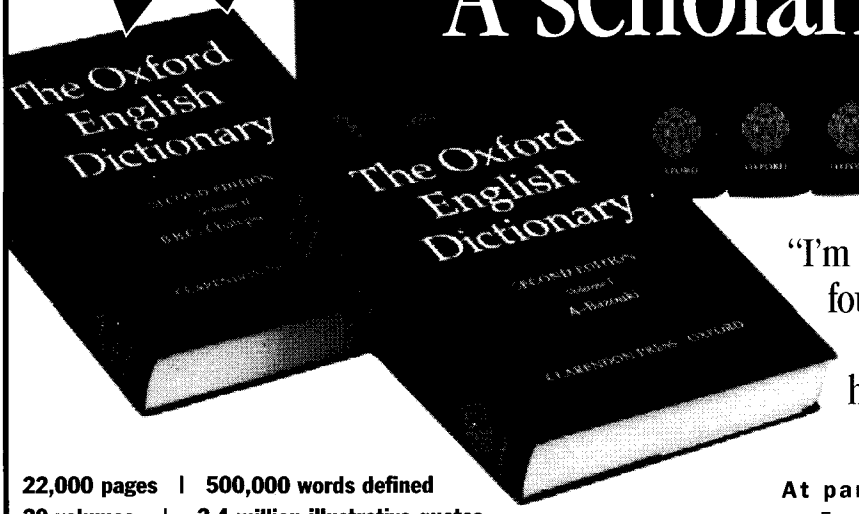

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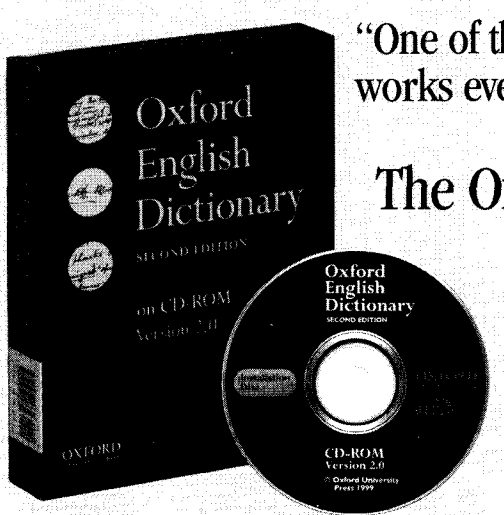

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their knowledge of the relevant history and theology is weak.

Marc Gelkopf is eager to demonstrate his Jewish authenticity, even invoking the ancestors of his young son who perished in Auschwitz. But when it comes to *brit milah*, the "Jewish values" he espouses mysteriously vaporize, and all he can see is a "perfect" baby being heartlessly "put under the knife." Mr. Gelkopf attributes to me the position that the *brit* is what makes a boy Jewish, but I actually wrote the reverse: "circumcision symbolizes but does not effectuate the covenant."

Norman L. Cohen is correct that I condemn the hedonism of those who argue that circumcision should be given up because the foreskin supposedly enhances sexual pleasure. He is incorrect, however, to think that the only alternative to the hedonism I criticize is the "antisexual sentiments" that he mistakenly attributes to me. In any case, there is reason to question the claim that long-term sexual pleasure is enhanced, rather than diminished, when "traditional virtues" are scuttled.

Here is the point of the analogy that James Hoyle misses: the analogy, that is, between saying that a Jewish boy will decide for himself upon reaching majority whether to have a *brit* and saying that he will at the same point decide what his mother tongue is. Given the almost unparalleled importance of *brit milah* in Jewish practice (see Maimonides, above), a boy raised in an environment in which this key *mitzvah* has been deliberately violated will have a very hard time approaching the question of Jewish observance and identity from a neutral position. The likelihood, in other words, is that his mind will have been made up beforehand. I suspect that most of the new enemies of circumcision know that. They also know that when the procedure is performed on an adult, healing takes longer and the pain may be more intense.

I thank Michael Herzbrun for noting that he personally does not regard as unanswerable the objections to *brit milah* that he pointedly raised in his article. But if he doubts that others find them unanswerable, he need only read the letters preceding his. Since I was careful at every stage to acknowledge the diversity of opinion within Reform Judaism on this issue, I cannot see how I have misrepresented Reform's position. If *brit milah* is to thrive among Jews of that affiliation, as Rabbi Herzbrun believes it will, then the movement will have to develop a more emphatic response to the forces, both internal and external, that are currently undermining it. It should, for example, repudiate the normless subjectivism of the cochairman of the *brit milah* board of Reform Judaism who wrote that "people have to fulfill their inner sense" as to whether the rite is "a meaningful way of connecting with the Jewish people."

Reform will also need to take something other than a laissez-faire attitude toward young rabbis, who, like those in the anecdote I quoted from Lawrence Hoffman, "frequently harbored intense rage at themselves for allowing [the *brit*] to happen." When a significant number of rabbis are furious with themselves for allowing a "life-cycle event" (to use Rabbi Herzbrun's term) to take place, surely it is proper to wonder about the commitment to that practice of the Jewish movement with which they are affiliated. Time will tell whether the psychoanalytic defense of *brit milah* that Rabbi Herzbrun proposes has the depth and durability of the classical theological and *halakhic* rationale that it is meant to replace.

I thank Eugene J. Cohen for raising the interesting possibility of employing anesthesia after the *brit*. The use of anesthetics during the *brit* is sufficiently controversial in Jewish law that I decided not to discuss it in my article. The weight of scientific research does not, however, support Rabbi Cohen's claim that "no pain registers in the child's brain."

I would also like to thank David C. Stolinsky for citing some of the mounting evidence for the advantage of circumcision in combating the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and for pointing out the irrationality and inconsistency of some opponents of the practice.

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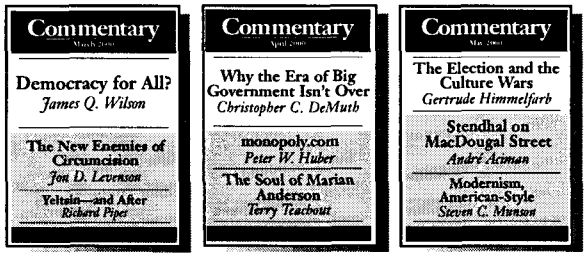

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Democracy

TO THE EDITOR:

James Q. Wilson's "Democracy for All?" [March] was, like everything he writes, intelligent, reasonable, and sober. And he is certainly right to cite the importance of accidental or preexisting factors—isolation, property, homogeneity, and tradition—in explaining the democratic success of the United States. But he has overlooked or downgraded factors that are equally, if not more, crucial.

Mr. Wilson begins by saying that he does not "intend to dwell on the ideas that have inspired, shaped, and informed democratic government." But this is no ethereal world, as his decision not to "dwell" on it might suggest. Rather, it is

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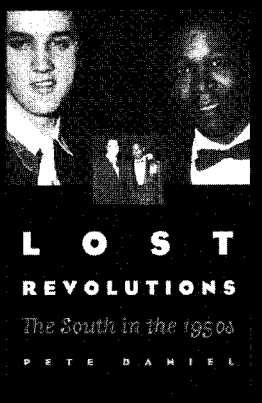

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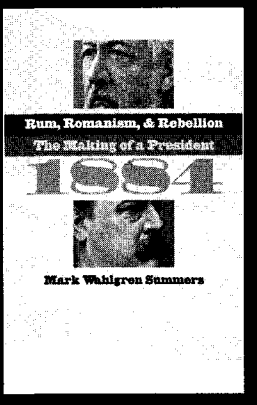

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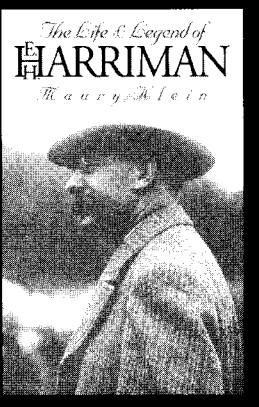

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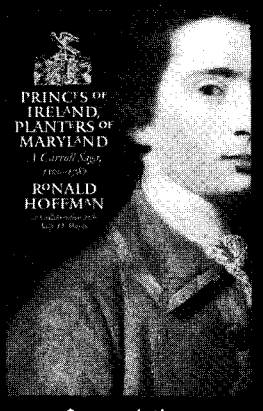

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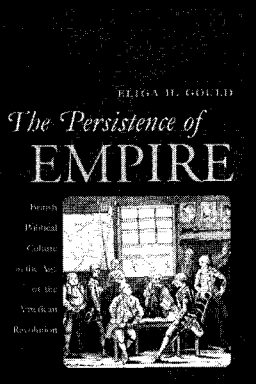

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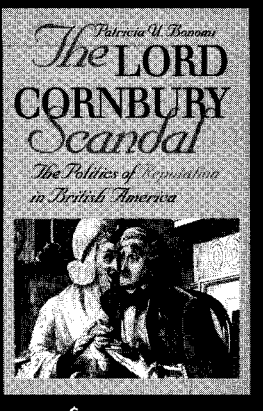

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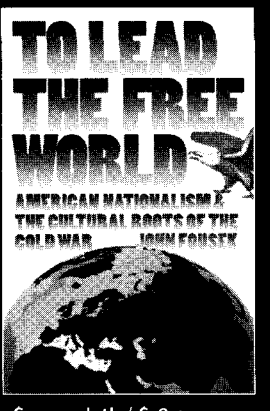

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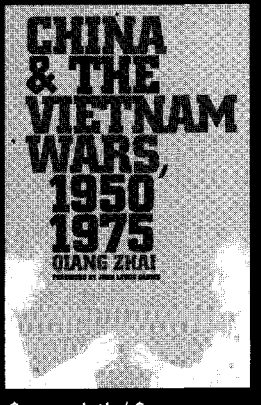

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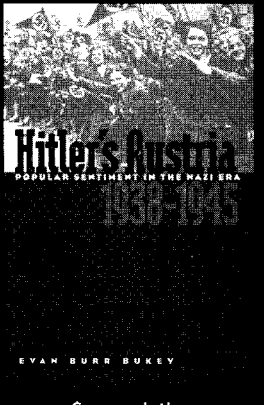

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the world of real human beings, whose political ideas and practical wisdom have made all the difference.

Take, for example, the statesmanship of George Washington. Reflecting on the difference between the American and French revolutions, Thomas Jefferson observed that it was because of Washington's character that the American Revolution did not degenerate into Bonapartism. The man who led Americans to independence voluntarily laid down his command of the Continental Army and submitted to the will of the American people. When it became apparent that the new American union was falling into instability, injustice, and confusion, Washington put his great moral authority behind a new national government. Resisting the demands for monarchy of some disaffected soldiers and would-be elites, Washington pushed hard for a government that combined the energy of a monarchy with the requirement of popular consent. No amount of accidental or preexisting "factors" can explain this phenomenon.

Mr. Wilson recites what Aristotle would call the material and efficient causes of Western democracy. But human beings and their ideas are also part of the story; indeed, they are the decisive part of it. Circumstances alone do not determine our fate; what we do with those circumstances makes all the difference. This is the eternal lesson of political science.

RICHARD H. REEB, JR.
Barstow College
Barstow, California

TO THE EDITOR:

James Q. Wilson's thought-provoking essay voices a welcome warning that democracy is not the automatic outcome of good intentions and reasonable desires for better living standards. A democratic society may not be possible in the absence of certain social preconditions. Of the four factors listed by Mr. Wilson as necessary for democracy—isolation, property, homogeneity, and tradition—I think property is the most valuable. His discussion of its history in Europe is enlightening.

Mr. Wilson's argument for the other three ingredients needs to be tempered, I think. While it is true that the seas have isolated America from bombs and England from invaders, it is also true that the most advanced countries are cosmopolitan societies, made so in part by prior invasions and by more recent waves of immigration. The resulting amalgam is perhaps stronger and more tolerant than a purebred ethnic society. In fact, extreme homogeneity, which was achieved by Spain when it drove out Arabs and Jews in the late 15th century, was a precursor to that country's descent into corruption and despotism.

Tradition is also a mixed blessing. When traditions are too strong, a society will likely suffer from ethnocentrism. The opposite pole, though—exemplified by modern multiculturalists, who recognize no unifying central traditions—is also dangerous.

BARRY J. SCHWARTZ
La Jolla, California

TO THE EDITOR:

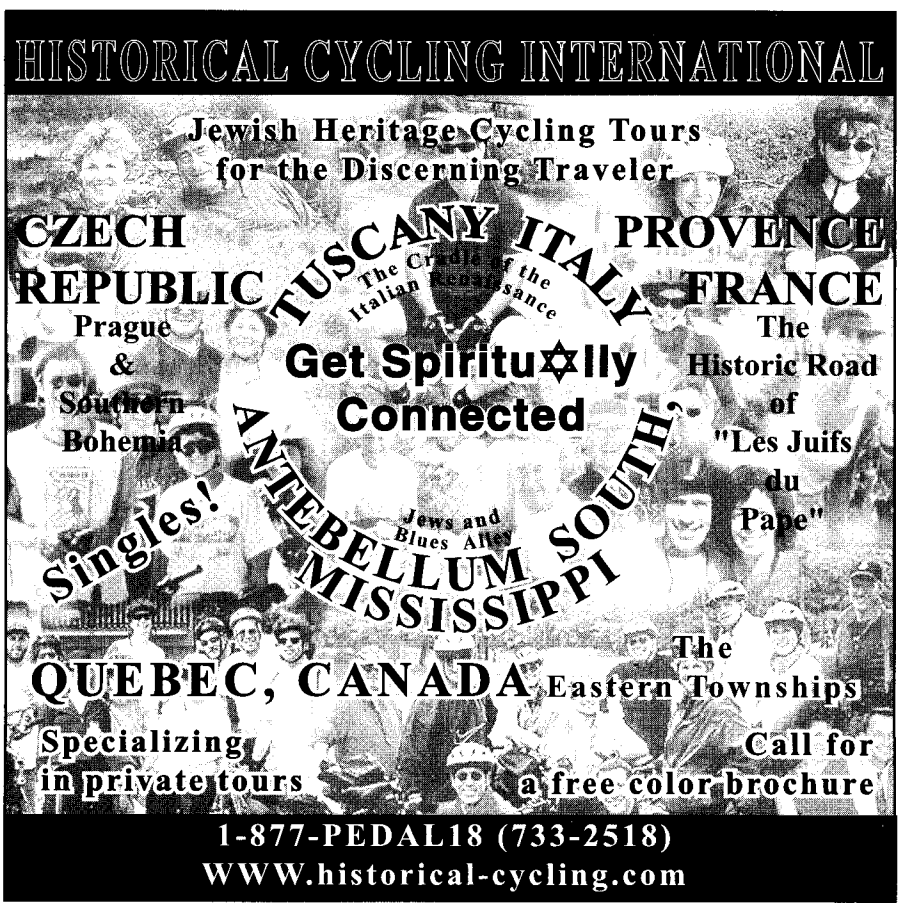
As a Canadian raised under the British system of democracy, I can attest to the importance of at least one of the four conditions for democracy listed by James Q. Wilson: namely, tradition.

When the British exported their system to Canada and the other commonwealth countries, it worked well, but when they brought that same system to Africa, which did not share British traditions, it failed. The British political system is designed to be efficient: the executive has all the power and is constrained only by tradition. Without tradition to stand in the way, the system can lead to dictatorship.

GEORGE F. BAIN
Vienna, Virginia

TO THE EDITOR:

I found James Q. Wilson's essay intensely interesting. While he has borrowed much from Alan MacFarlane on the role of private prop-



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erty in England, Mr. Wilson has at the same time persuasively brought his own powers of analysis to bear on the origins of working democracies and the conditions that produce them.

It seems to me, however, that England is a bit of a puzzle as a source of modern democracy. Although an island and consequently insulated from the instability caused by insecure borders, England was nevertheless invaded by Romans (resulting in 400 years of Roman hegemony), by Normans (who never really left), and by Norsemen (who managed to penetrate rather far inland)—not to mention early influxes of Gauls, Celts, etc. This hardly gives a picture of a secure, relatively serene landscape on which a common language and a civilized, stable culture could easily and naturally arise. But it did.

DONALD R. SNIPPER
Indian Harbor Beach, Florida

JAMES Q. WILSON writes:

Richard H. Reeb, Jr. rightly points out the importance of great men such as Washington, a point I do not dispute. My concern, however, was to describe the kind of country that would not only elect Washington, but at the same time surround him with constitutional constraints and support him with popular affection. Washington was important to the Constitutional Convention as a hero, but the work of that convention was done by others who were powerfully influenced by isolation, property, homogeneity, and tradition.

The other letters make useful points, though I would modify the ideas of Barry J. Schwartz and Donald R. Snipper in this way: Immigration differs from invasion, and America's success has flowed from having a lot of the former and none of the latter. And the invasions suffered by England ended in 1066, leaving its people with almost a thousand years during which to develop a political tradition. Bosnia would be happy to get 50 years free of alien forces.

American Opera

TO THE EDITOR:

The wonderful Terry Teachout dismisses John Harbison's *The Great Gatsby* as "an overlong opera that is stolidly competent and hopelessly undramatic" ["American Opera In Progress," March]. In detailing that opera's faults, Mr. Teachout is clinically and brilliantly accurate. But he overlooks the zany, surrealistic power of the first 20-25 minutes of its second act, which, in addition to the immense public interest in the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel, will assure Harbison's new work an occasional place in many operatic repertories for years to come.

Mr. Teachout concludes that "American opera . . . will not come into its long-delayed maturity until a characteristically American genius leads the way," and for him this genius will be a sort of American Benjamin Britten. Mr. Teachout forgets that there are geniuses, and then there are *geniuses*. If the new century's geniuses resemble most of the last's in their musical disposition, almost every performing classical-music institution will be out of business in 50 years.

Orchestral music does not need another Arnold Schoenberg; it needs a Tchaikovsky. Chamber music does not need another Alban Berg, or even a Britten; it needs a Puccini. In fact, we do not need a genius at all. Rather, we need a composer who will bring young people to concert halls by the busload.

ROGER KOLB
Somerville, Massachusetts

TERRY TEACHOUT writes:

I appreciate being called "wonderful," so perhaps I can draw on my credit with Roger Kolb and encourage him to think twice, and maybe even a third time, about the best 20th-century music, by which I do not mean Schoenberg. I like Tchaikovsky and Puccini, too, but I like Prokofiev and Copland just as much, not to mention a long list

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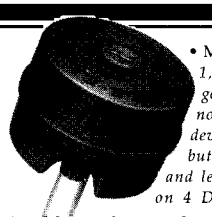

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Peace with Syria

Should Israel surrender the Golan Heights?

Almost irresistible pressure is being exerted on Israel to surrender the Golan Heights to Syria, in order to achieve peace with that country. The pressure comes, of course, from the Arab countries, but regrettably also from the European nations and even the United States – Israel's best and most steadfast friend.

What are the facts?

Indispensable for Israel's defense. The Golan, a plateau approximately the size of the borough of Queens in New York, has, since biblical times, been a part of Palestine. It was (in a great-power play) ceded by Britain to the French mandate, following World War I. When the French in 1941 granted Syria independence, the Golan became part of that country. It is not, as the Syrians like to claim, "holy Arab territory", of which not an inch can ever be ceded.

Since the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, the Syrians shelled the settlements of northern Israel almost daily and made life there intolerable. In the War of 1967 (the "Six-Day War"), the Syrians treacherously attacked Israel through the Golan and almost succeeded in defeating it. It would have been the end of the Jewish state. Miraculously, Israel was able to repel the aggressors and to occupy the Golan Heights. The Golan has since then been integrated politically and in every other respect into the State of Israel. What used to be a wilderness has become, under Israeli administration, a successful province, with prospering cities and flourishing agriculture. But most important of all: The Golan is totally indispensable for the defense of Israel.

That makes it incomprehensible why our President, who, like the American people, is interested in the survival of Israel, presses that country to relinquish the Golan. Without the Golan, and with the Golan in the hands of those whose death wish for Israel has never been abandoned, Israel would be indefensible.

Never in the history of the world has a defeated aggressor successfully insisted that territories lost during its aggression be returned to it before being willing to make peace with the victor. Germany does not ask France to return Alsace-Lorraine, nor Poland to return the large chunks of eastern Germany that were allotted to it at the end of World War II. Why then the insistence that tiny Israel deprive itself of an area that is totally vital to its survival?

Unprecedented though it would be, an agreement with Syria about the Golan would be possible and acceptable to Israel if it would bring about *real* peace with Syria. But that is not in the cards. The hatred against Israel is so deep-seated that it would take progressive leaders and at least a generation or two to overcome it. Syrian newspapers and broadcasts are filled with venom and unending hatred against Israel. Schoolchildren, beginning with the earliest grades, are filled with poisonous invective against the "Nazi-Zionist entity". The official government line is that the Arabs (under Syrian leadership) must mass their resources to "liberate all occupied Arab land". And that, of course, is a code word for Israel. Israel must be eliminated.

> "There is a way to make peace with Syria: Israel would return sovereignty of the Golan to Syria, but would lease the territory from it for an agreed-upon period. That is what the British did in Hong Kong and what we are doing in Guantanamo."

Syrian "chutzpah". The gall, the "chutzpah" of the Syrians is almost beyond belief. Syria is a third-rate country, with a bankrupt economy, and – having lost the support of the Soviet Union – a second-rate military power. Still, in their dealings with Israel, they act as though they were victors and in a position of great strength. While Mr. Barak, the Prime Minister of Israel, appears to jump through hoops to "negotiate" with the Syrians, Syria's top man – the dictator, Hafez Assad – cannot be bothered to attend any meetings. He sends his number-two man, who is instructed not to shake hands with the hated Israelis and not to enter any discussions unless the Israelis agree beforehand to every demand the Syrians have to make. It is sad that the Israelis, being in a position of total strength, would consider such humiliating conditions.

In case any agreement on the governmental level were reached that Israel should return the Golan to Syria, such agreement would still be subject to a plebiscite of the Israeli electorate. Such approval should be by a super-majority – namely by a majority of all eligible voters, and not just by a majority of those voting. We in the United States are well acquainted with super-majorities for matters of great consequence, such as amending the Constitution. Could Israel be expected to divest itself of part of its country and of a vital strategic asset by just one vote?

There is a way to make peace with Syria: Israel would return sovereignty of the Golan to Syria, but would lease the territory from it for an agreed-upon period – 25 or 50 years. That is what the British did in Hong Kong and what we are doing in Guantanamo, Cuba. It seems to work out well, even for nations that (as between Cuba and us) are hostile to each other. During such time, one would hope that public opinion in Syria and in the other Arab countries had matured sufficiently for Israel to be able to afford relinquishing this strategic asset. For Syria to agree to such a settlement would be a positive step toward peace – proof of their good intentions. But, regrettably, the acceptance by Syria of such a solution is unlikely.

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of other wonderful composers active in the century just past, virtually all of whom figured in my "Masterpieces of the Century" series [April, May, June 1999]—a good starting point, if I do say so myself, for anyone who has been reluctant to explore the modern movement in classical music.

Flying Saucers

TO THE EDITOR:

Samuel McCracken's "Close Encounters of the Harvard Kind" [March] raises questions about the work of John E. Mack on UFO's. Many of your readers will scoff at the possibility—insisted upon by Dr. Mack—of being abducted by aliens. Others, more sensible, however, will prepare themselves for the experience, and seek to enhance it when it comes. I would refer the latter to my treatise, *How to Make the Most of a Flying Saucer Experience*. It contains useful advice for abductees, including the following:

1. Prepare in advance an Encounter Kit—a bag containing various items (sweater, toothbrush, Martian dictionary, etc.) that could prove handy during your stay aboard the saucer. Keep this bag where you can grab it when they come for you.

2. Have a positive attitude. View your abduction not as a misfortune but as *the opportunity of a lifetime*!

3. Get the aliens to share with you their wisdom—their comprehensive vision of the universe, life, and the environment.

4. Try to learn some of the language of your hosts—they will appreciate the effort and possibly treat you better.

5. Most flying saucers have a circular corridor along their perimeter. To stay fit during your abduction—and to relieve stress—go jogging along this corridor.

6. Should the aliens subject you to a medical exam, demand a complete report—and immediate, free treatment.

7. Get the aliens to dictate to you a message for humanity. Then use their message (however vapid and cliché-ridden it may be) as the basis for a book.

A flying-saucer experience, as Dr. Mack warns, can happen to anyone. But don't just have that experience—make the most of it! It can be empowering.

MICHAEL P. SOLOMON
Baltimore, Maryland

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CONTROVERSY

Are School Vouchers the Answer?

Gary Rosen & Critics

BOB CHASE:

Gary Rosen misrepresents many sincere opponents of taxpayer-funded vouchers for private and religious schools when he accuses "liberal and Democratic standard-bearers" of continuing to "stonewall" for the status quo in public education ["Are School Vouchers Un-American?," February].

The National Education Association opposes vouchers for many reasons, but blind defense of the status quo is not among them. The status quo in too many urban public schools is both indefensible and unacceptable. Like voucher proponents, we want every student in struggling schools to receive the best education possible. Where we part company is over how to achieve that goal. This much we do know: an overwhelming majority of Americans prefer to invest their tax dollars in improving our public schools—not in unproven voucher programs.

Rather than reversing what Mr. Rosen calls "the cruel process of marginalization" among poor, mostly minority students, vouchers are more likely to have the opposite effect. Consider New Zealand's decision to bring "choice" to its 2,700 public schools. When schools there have more applicants than seats, they are entitled to develop "enrollment schemes" to help them select students. As a result, the country's best schools—not necessarily its parents—are doing all the choosing, and disadvantaged students are increasingly concentrated in low-ranked institutions.

There is nothing in the nature of private and religious schools in the U.S. to suggest a different outcome if vouchers were to become a "full-scale public policy" here, as Mr. Rosen plainly hopes. Catholic schools, which comprise a large majority of voucher schools in Milwaukee and Cleveland, already reject two-thirds of their applicants. Exclusive private schools reject nine out of every ten.

Indeed, why would we expect our free-market system—which by definition must have "winners" and "losers"—to resolve the inherent inequities in our most troubled inner-city public schools? I do not want *any* "losers," and the fact is that vouchers will not improve education for the vast majority of students, who would not receive them.

If the potential social cost of vouchers seems obvious, the economic cost is already documented. Milwaukee, which now spends nearly $40 million on 8,000 voucher students, avoided deep cuts in its public-school budget only by raising property taxes as an offset. In addition, when voucher students leave a classroom, taking their per-pupil state aid with them, the school's fixed costs remain the same; the teacher and the electricity bill still must be paid.

Imagine, then, the consequences of a "full-scale public policy" that would give a $2,000 voucher to any American family, regardless of income. The first takers, before a single public-school student received any help, would be the families of the seven million students already attending private and religious schools. Failing passage of a national "voucher tax," this $14 billion—for students who have never set foot in a public school—would come from public-school budgets.

The primary question we should be asking is this: are vouchers the best educational investment we can make with admittedly scarce resources? Official studies (as opposed to those

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conducted by self-acknowledged provoucher researcher Paul Peterson and cited by Mr. Rosen) are at best inconclusive regarding student achievement in voucher programs.

But consider Wisconsin's four-year-old Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE) program—now in 78 schools, many of them in Milwaukee. It currently targets students in kindergarten to third grade at an average additional per-pupil cost of approximately $1,300. SAGE features smaller classes, a rigorous curriculum, before- and after-school programs, and high-level professional development and accountability for teachers—in short, the very things that characterize successful schools everywhere.

The most recent evaluation of the program found that students in first and third grades scored higher in language arts and math than their public-school counterparts. More importantly perhaps, African-American SAGE students—many of them the same students targeted by voucher programs—made significantly larger gains than students in a comparison group, closing the achievement gap between themselves and white students. Instead of spending $40 million on 8,000 Milwaukee voucher students, why not spend the same $40 million on 30,000 SAGE students?

Vouchers are not the answer to improving public schools. As to whether they are "un-American," I would like to think that a genuine commitment to giving all children—regardless of zip code—safe, modern classrooms, small classes, talented teachers, and adequate educational resources is about as "American" as it gets.

President
National Education Association
Washington, D.C.

SANDRA FELDMAN:

In a striking example of how ideological and degraded the debate over vouchers has become, Gary Rosen assigns to himself and other voucher advocates an exclusive, overriding concern for the educational interests of poor children—yet never discusses either education or poverty. I happen to know a lot about both, personally and professionally.

I am not ideological about vouchers. If I thought they would improve poor children's education, I would be for them. But when all the smoke is cleared in the voucher wars, the case for vouchers is just not there.

I fail to see how poor children are served by distorting data to suggest that all their public schools are failures. Over the past 30 years, we have halved the performance gap between black and white students, and in the last five years alone, we have raised the achievement of our poorest children by a grade level. I also cannot see how poor children are served by using unverifiable anecdotes to claim that virtually all the nonpublic schools they attend are successful, including ones that, Mr. Rosen admits, "promote disquietingly false ideas." The evidence is clear that public and private school achievement is comparable when student background is taken into account.

Why make the issue public versus private schools when *both* sectors face special challenges in educating disadvantaged children? And how can we believe Mr. Rosen's assurance that voucher ideologues are really out to improve, rather than defund, poor children's underfunded schools when he scurrilously asserts that "unionized public-school" teachers are not "profoundly committed to their disadvantaged students" because their substandard salaries are above the even lousier wages of private-school teachers (who mostly do not have to be certified and are increasingly unionized)? I certainly doubt poor children will get their fair share of qualified teachers if we make vows of poverty the test of teacher quality.

But let us pretend for a moment that Mr. Rosen is correct in claiming that the voucher experiments in Cleveland and Milwaukee are raising voucher students' achievement relative to their public-school peers, even though every independent evaluation has said otherwise. You then have to ask, vouchers for poor children as compared to what? Princeton's Cecilia Rouse provided one answer when she re-analyzed all the Milwaukee voucher research, favorable and otherwise, and compared the results to the achievement of low-income Milwaukee *public-school* students in a program emphasizing small class size. Small class size trumped vouchers. Similarly, "Success for All," a reading program operating in hundreds of the poorest public schools at a fraction of the cost of vouchers, trumps achievement gains claimed for vouchers by a factor of seven to one.

I repeat: the issue is improving poor children's education. So instead of conducting yet another failed voucher experiment, I propose we do something unprecedented in America by providing educational adequacy for poor children. Not "throwing money" at badly managed schools, but specifically funding what specifically works, and thereby assuring poor children the same basics that are almost a birthright for other children: high-quality, early-childhood education; small class size; and a rich curriculum taught by fully qualified teachers, which means making teacher standards, salaries, and professional conditions in poor districts comparable to those of advantaged communities.

And to those who say that this will take too long but that vouchers will help a parent whose child is trapped in a failing public school today, I have a counterproposal. First, allow parents whose children attend failing schools to transfer them to an achieving public school. Second, close down failing public schools at semester's end, redesign them over the summer using proven programs, reopen them in the fall, and provide immediate extra supports to any child who is behind or in danger of falling behind.

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Is this hard to do? Yes. But it is being done, and the American Federation of Teachers is helping to do it, and we need more help to make it the norm. Unlike vouchers, the evidence shows that our approach works. It also does not produce greater social stratification, or breach the wall of separation between church and state, or force taxpayers to support religions to which they do not subscribe, or fund nonpublic schools that are unaccountable to the public.

And, yes, I would say that ensuring educational adequacy for poor children—who would disproportionately depend on public schools even under a voucher system—is decidedly less "un-American," "reactionary," and morally indifferent than handing off our social responsibilities to the untender mercies of an educational market.

President
American Federation of Teachers
Washington, D.C.

RALPH G. NEAS:

For several years now, people like Gary Rosen have been trying to sell Americans on the idea of publicly funded vouchers for private and religious schools. But what we now know about vouchers should give all of us pause. For one thing, they cost more and benefit fewer children than proven education reforms, like programs that reduce class size or focus on developing reading skills. Vouchers also have the effect of further impoverishing needy schools. In Cleveland, the $11.2 million cost of vouchers last year was deducted from state funds that could otherwise have gone to help disadvantaged kids throughout the city's public schools. The program's 41-percent cost overrun in its second year was made up from funds earmarked for public schools.

We have also seen scandalous abuses with vouchers. Investigative journalists for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* profiled a voucher school with peeling lead paint and no fire alarms or sprinkler system, where two-thirds of the teachers were not licensed and one was a convicted murderer. Another voucher school based its entire instructional program on videotapes. In one of the unfortunately named "Hope Academies," a local television station discovered that children were disciplined by being forced to wear paper bags over their heads, with their hands bound behind their backs with tape.

The good news is that these abuses were uncovered and stopped. The bad news is that the comparative secrecy in which private schools operate allowed them in the first place. Accountability and oversight of schools that receive public money is not just unnecessary bureaucratic red tape, as many voucher supporters would have us believe.

The educational record of voucher schools is mixed at best, as independent research has repeatedly shown. In Milwaukee and Cleveland—the only two voucher programs that have operated long enough for measurements to mean anything—independent state-sponsored evaluations did not bear out voucher proponents' claims that students would do much better. In fact, some did much worse. Wisconsin has now simply stopped testing voucher students, so how they are doing is anybody's guess, a fact reflected in the latest state audit.

In addition, it only takes reading the mission statements of a few of the religious schools now receiving vouchers to understand why these programs pose an irreconcilable constitutional problem. Virtually without exception, these schools describe their goal as instilling in children the tenets of their faith. Though this goal is entirely appropriate for a private religious school, it is entirely inappropriate for government to support this goal with taxpayer dollars.

President
People For the
American Way Foundation
Washington, D.C.

STEVEN R. SHAPIRO:

Gary Rosen's essay in support of school vouchers understates their constitutional flaws. There is considerable doubt that the Supreme Court will ever uphold an educational program that transfers millions of dollars in taxpayer money to pervasively sectarian schools that regard religious indoctrination as part of their primary mission.

Significantly, Mr. Rosen fails to mention the Supreme Court's decision in *PEARL* v. *Nyquist* (1973), which struck down a New York State law providing tuition grants to private-school students in an early precursor to current voucher plans. Now, as then, the vast majority of voucher recipients used their vouchers to attend parochial schools. The explanation for this is simple: most private education in this country remains affiliated with religious institutions, and the typical voucher is insufficient to pay the tuition at many nonsectarian private schools, whose budgets are not subsidized by religious orders.

Mr. Rosen argues that the Supreme Court has recently become more sympathetic to government funding of religious institutions in some circumstances. But each of the cases that he cites involved general-benefit government programs in which the aid to religion was both incidental and minor. It is one thing to say, as the Supreme Court did in 1993, that the relative handful of deaf children who attend parochial schools should not be denied a sign-language interpreter at state expense merely because their parents chose a religious education. It is quite another thing to say that the state should use taxpayer dollars to subsidize the religious education of thousands of children.

The fact that the decision to attend parochial school is made by the parents rather than by the state does not solve the constitutional problem, as Mr. Rosen suggests. If it did, then the state could simply fund parochial schools on the same basis that it now

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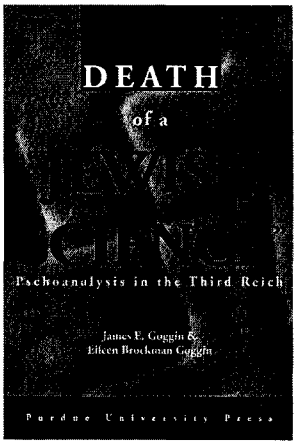

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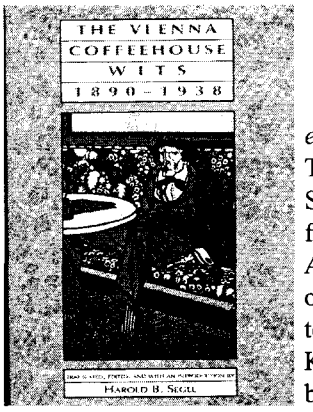

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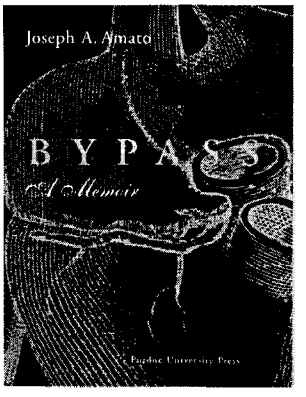

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funds public schools without even going through the charade of first sending a voucher to the parents. A Supreme Court opinion endorsing that result would require more than a shift in church-state law; it would require a revolution.

National Legal Director
American Civil Liberties Union
New York City

MICHAEL W. APPLE:

Gary Rosen presents vouchers simply as a tool to improve the lives of inner-city students, but many, if not most, voucher supporters have a much more ambitious agenda. In Wisconsin, Polly Williams—a Democratic, African-American state legislator—joined the state's Republican governor a decade ago in crafting a voucher plan limited to poor children in Milwaukee's inner-city schools. Yet, once the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled that the program was constitutional, its conservative supporters began calling for its expansion to include *all* parents who wished to pull their children out of public schools, even those who are affluent. Though still a supporter of vouchers targeted to low-income families, Williams has attacked her erstwhile allies, accusing them of not having the interests of her constituents at heart.

Moreover, though Mr. Rosen claims that vouchers do not cause added hardship for public schools, an extensive body of international research on the use of competitive markets in education leads to exactly the opposite conclusion. In such settings, teachers and administrators spend much more time on maintaining the image of a "good" school than on curricular substance. Since it is comparative test scores that determine whether a school is "good" or "bad," children who perform well on such reductive tests are welcome, but those who do not are often discouraged or marginalized.

Much of the literature in support of vouchers assumes that unprepared teachers and overly bureaucratic schools are the root cause of the supposed decline in education. But this ignores the larger structural realities of our inner cities. It is simply not possible to understand what has happened in education unless we honestly link schooling to the growth of poverty. One of the most consistent research findings over the past decades has been that income inequality and other social and economic factors—not type of school—have the most power in determining success in schools.

Despite this unfortunate relationship between education and economic inequality, there are things that can be done and have been proven to work. But effective schooling does not mean turning our schools over to the market.

Vouchers are part of a larger and quite aggressive ideological movement to change how we think about society and our participation in it. This effort by conservatives aims to change the very meaning of citizenship, defining it simply as consumer choice and moving away from the collective building and rebuilding of our institutions. I somehow doubt that this reduction of democracy to selfish individualism is what we as a society want.

School of Education
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

YALE M. ZUSSMAN:

Gary Rosen claims that students who use vouchers are indistinguishable from their peers in the public schools, but this is simply not true. They differ in that all of them have parents who are interested enough in education to make the sacrifices necessary to send their children to private schools.

As a teacher, I can report that there are many children in public schools, especially in urban districts, whose parents do not care about education. This attitude has a significant impact on behavior and achievement in the classroom. Such students are more likely to disrupt classes, and it only takes two or three of them to degrade an entire classroom environment. What are we to expect if something like half of a school's student body comes from such a background?

Vouchers could leave the public schools with an even higher percentage of unmotivated students and indifferent parents. If this happens, support for public education will evaporate, and the students left behind will be abandoned to their misery.

Quincy, Massachusetts

FREDERIC WILE:

Gary Rosen's otherwise balanced presentation is marred by his suggestion that declining student achievement represents a failure of the educational system. As someone who taught and counseled in New York City's public schools for more than 30 years, I would point out that these institutions once consistently produced graduates who were the envy of the nation, and this at a time when classes were 25 percent larger than they are today.

What has changed is the attitude about standards, conduct, and learning that students bring with them to school. In this, there has been a great decline, and often with the institutional support of the academic and political establishment. After all, when organizations like the ACLU, with the complicity of the courts, make it extremely difficult to remove miscreants from the classroom, or when the City University of New York gives tuition-free admission to students with low grade-point averages, what is an impressionable adolescent to conclude?

The source of today's educational problems is not the public schools but rather the homes where students are raised and the politically correct attitudes of the surrounding culture. Until these are dealt with, vouchers, charter schools, or any other reform will improve things marginally at best.

New York City

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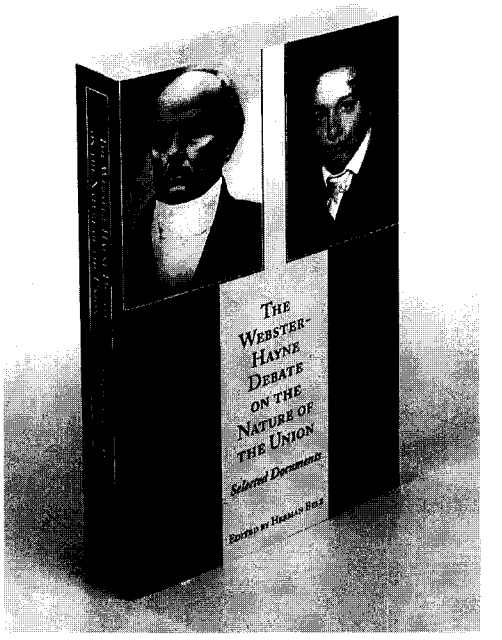
THE WEBSTER-HAYNE DEBATE ON THE NATURE OF THE UNION

Introduction by Herman Belz



The debates between Daniel Webster of Massachusetts and Robert Hayne of South Carolina gave fateful utterance to the differing understandings of the nature of the American Union that had come to predominate in the North and the South, respectively, by 1830. To Webster the Union was the indivisible expression of one nation of people. To Hayne the Union was the voluntary compact among sovereign states. Each man spoke more or less for his section, and their classic expositions of their respective views framed the political conflicts that culminated at last in the secession of the Southern states and war between advocates of Union and champions of Confederacy. ***The Webster-Hayne Debate*** consists of speeches delivered in the United States Senate in January of 1830. By no means were Webster and Hayne the only Senators who engaged in debate "on the nature of the Union." Well over a score of the Senate's members spoke in response in sixty-five speeches all told, and these Senators did not merely echo either of the principals. The key speakers and viewpoints are included in ***The Webster-Hayne Debate***. The volume opens with Hayne's speech, which, as Herman Belz observes, turned debates on "the public lands" into "a clash between state sovereignty and national sovereignty, expounded as rival and irreconcilable theories of constitutional construction and the nature of the federal Union." Webster responded, Hayne retorted, and Webster concluded with an appeal to "Liberty and Union, now and forever, one and inseparable," in what later historians would deem to be "the most powerful and effective speech ever given in an American legislature." Other speeches in the volume are by Senators Thomas Hart Benton, John Rowan, William Smith, John M. Clayton, and Edward Livingston. Together, these speeches represent every major perspective on "the nature of the Union" in the early nineteenth century.

Herman Belz is Professor of History at the University of Maryland, and the author most recently of *A Living Constitution or Fundamental Law?: American Constitutionalism in Historical Perspective* and *Abraham Lincoln, Constitutionalism, and Equal Rights During the Civil War Era.*

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TODD KADISH:

I enjoyed Gary Rosen's article on vouchers, and I agree with many of his criticisms of the public schools and the teachers' unions. He failed, however, to address several serious issues.

First, there are fiscal problems with vouchers. When money is sent to the government as a tax payment and then returned to a private citizen, funds are wasted in transactional costs. Funds will also be wasted by the bureaucracy administering vouchers.

In addition, it has been my experience that, when religious bodies establish a significant presence in a community and become politically involved, they are often able to win a reduction in the local tax burden by arguing that their own schools relieve government of the burden of educating many children. This argument will be undermined by vouchers.

On a different matter, Mr. Rosen's contention that "the most extreme [groups] are unlikely to tolerate the regulations that come along with vouchers, not least the almost universal requirement that schools accept any student interested in attending" is probably wrong. Many extreme groups, like Farrakhan's Nation of Islam, may actually fear such regulations *less* because few parents would be foolish enough to send young, impressionable children with a different background to their schools. Moreover, if these groups were denied vouchers, they would simply scream "discrimination," welcoming the publicity from a legal fight with the government.

There could be other legal battles as well. If the schools receiving vouchers are seen as promoting "racism" or "homophobia," the courts may be asked to deny them public funds. A successful legal challenge could lead to government censors reviewing private-school textbooks and classes.

All things considered, I would suggest that conservatives are undermining their own interests by supporting vouchers.

Brooklyn, New York

BILL TANKSLEY:

Gary Rosen's well-written essay makes the liberal position on school vouchers understandable in an even-handed way and then unravels it very convincingly and forcefully. He succeeds admirably in exposing the educational establishment's underlying motives of power and control.

The glaring delinquency of Mr. Rosen's otherwise excellent work is his omission of conservative arguments against school vouchers. He must be aware that, as certainly as night follows day, government control follows government money. What educational freedom does he expect in schools that have become dependent on state funds? Has he forgotten about our private colleges and universities, where entitlement to government funds has led to the regulation of curricula, sports, housing, admissions, student associations, and even faculty selection and training?

The greatest lesson that we can learn from the past 50 years is that government help always comes with strings attached.

Oceanside, California

STEVEN E. PLAUT:

In Gary Rosen's otherwise sensible endorsement of vouchers, he needlessly agonizes over "accountability." Schools chosen by parents using vouchers are accountable not because of government regulators and inspectors who "protect" the consumer. Rather, they are accountable because, under competition, consumers take their money away from poor products and spend it on good products. No one thinks parents will seek out poor schools for their children.

University of Haifa
Haifa, Israel

HOWARD FULLER:

Just as Gary Rosen's article appeared, Wisconsin's Legislative Audit Bureau, an independent, nonpartisan state agency, issued an evaluation of the ten-year-old Milwaukee voucher program. This report, described in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* under the headline, "Audit Dispels Choice Myths," contradicts virtually all of the claims and distortions catalogued by Mr. Rosen and relentlessly advanced by voucher opponents. The Audit Bureau concluded, among other things, that the choice program in Milwaukee had neither unfairly affected public-school finances, worsened racial segregation, nor excluded low-achieving children and those with special needs.

Evidence from elsewhere in the nation suggests that Milwaukee's positive experience with vouchers is not an anomaly. Researchers on school choice increasingly agree:

- that the existing programs are primarily serving low-income, minority parents;
- that these parents are more satisfied with their new schools than with the public schools they left;
- that the voucher programs do not harm public schools but rather, in the words of one group of researchers, encourage "bureaucrats in the central district offices to empower their more innovative teachers and principals, creating new and often promising programs in the public schools";
- and, finally, that voucher students have made gains on test scores that are equal to, or a little better than, those of their public-school counterparts.

For African-American parents and other parents of color, a repugnant double standard contaminates the voucher debate, embodied in the idea that parental choice is somehow a new or untested concept. It is not. The power to make educational choices is widespread, longstanding, and highly valued—by those who have it. All that is new is that a small number of low-income parents finally have won a power that middle- and upper-

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IN THE CURRENT ISSUE OF *PARTISAN REVIEW:*

"Computers will become invisible and disappear into our clothing and eyeglasses, it'll be another step in the intimacy of the connection, and a further step as they then go into our brains, something I call the non-invasive, surgery-free, reversible, programmable, distributed neural implant. Then computers will really expand our experiences and our cognitive functions. By 2035 or 2040, human beings will be a combination of biological and non-biological intelligence. emerged from the civilization of the human machine."

Ray Kurzweil, Symposium on "Knowledge & Information Technology"

And:

Annie Cohen-Solal on Lévi-Strauss in America
Karen Wilkin's "At the Galleries"
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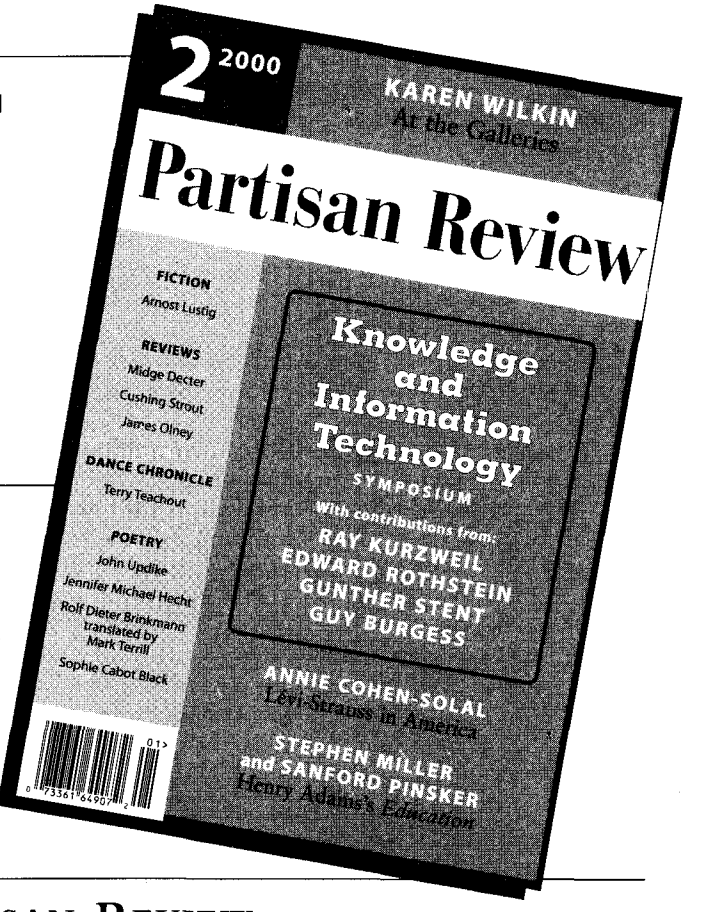

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income parents have always taken for granted.

Institute for the Transformation of Learning
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

ROBERT HOLLAND:

Thank you for Gary Rosen's perceptive article on school vouchers. It is among the most cogent analyses of the issue that I have seen, and exposes very clearly the hypocrisy and short-sightedness of many voucher foes.

The social scientists who study this issue are often labeled pro- or antivoucher from the outset. But what is remarkable is the extent to which researchers of divergent political perspectives now agree on the benefits of choice. All of them have found that parents who use vouchers to send their children to private or parochial schools are far more satisfied with their schools' academics, discipline, safety, and teaching of values than are public-school parents. Parental satisfaction is, in itself, a major success, given that it leads to parental involvement where there was little before. In addition, with a few exceptions, the research teams have found that voucher students have done better on standardized tests than have their public-school peers.

What of those "left behind"? Mr. Rosen effectively rebuts the argument that vouchers have skimmed the "cream" from public classrooms. To the contrary, the experiments in choice are serving the disadvantaged clientele they were designed to serve.

This is not enough for some voucher foes. They argue, in effect, that all poor children should be held hostage in order to force a magical transformation of urban public education, a transformation that years of governmental crash programs have yet to produce. Letting a fortunate few captives escape, they suggest, somehow worsens matters for the rest.

The good news is that vouchers are helping public-school students, too. When philanthropist Virginia Gilder offered private scholarships to all the students of the worst-performing public elementary school in Albany, New York, school officials, as Mr. Rosen reports, suddenly felt the need to reform that school top to bottom. Students there are now benefiting from a "Success for All" reading curriculum that was instituted because of the competition. Similar responses to the voucher challenge have come from public schools in San Antonio, Milwaukee, Pensacola, and elsewhere.

Voucher foes ought to open their hearts and minds to what is happening in these places. As Gary Rosen brings to light, the school-choice movement ultimately embodies the best egalitarian instincts of the nation.

Lexington Institute
Arlington, Virginia

JAY P. GREENE:

Gary Rosen's observation that "voucher programs are succeeding... from the perspective of the families taking part in them" is simply stating what is now the consensus among the researchers who study school choice. The publicly funded choice programs in Milwaukee and Cleveland and the privately funded ones in New York City, Washington, D.C., and Dayton have received, among them, eight evaluations from four different groups of researchers. Every one of these evaluations has found positive effects to some degree, and all the evaluators support the continuation, if not the expansion, of the choice programs.

In Milwaukee, one evaluation—conducted by Paul Peterson of Harvard, along with Jiangtao Du and myself—compared winners and losers in the lottery to assign vouchers and found that voucher recipients benefited by six points in reading and eleven points in math after four years of participation in the program. Cecilia Rouse of Princeton also analyzed this data. She found that voucher students outperformed students in the comparison group by 1.5 to 2.3 percentile points a year in math, though she did not find significant benefits in reading.

Using a different (and, to my mind, inferior) comparison group, John Witte of the University of Wisconsin, the third evaluator, found that vouchers in Milwaukee neither substantially improved nor harmed student test scores. Nonetheless, Witte has endorsed the Milwaukee effort. "If programs are devised correctly," he writes, "they can provide meaningful educational choices to families that now do not have such choices. And it is not trivial that most people in America . . . already have such choices."

In Cleveland, Kim Metcalf of Indiana University concluded that voucher students had "significantly higher test scores than public-school students in language (45.0 versus 40.0) and science (40.0 versus 36.0)." Paul Peterson and I, along with William Howell of Stanford, analyzed a different group of scores from Cleveland and found that after two years, choice students may have benefited by as much as eight points in reading and sixteen points in math.

As for the privately funded voucher programs, Peterson and Howell, along with Patrick Wolf of Georgetown, conducted independent evaluations in all three cities and found that choice students had benefited significantly. In New York, they had gained between two and six points in math and reading, depending on grade level. In Washington, D.C., African-American students in the second through the fifth grade had gained seven points in reading (though at the same time students in the sixth through the eighth grade lost eight points in math). In Dayton, African-American students gained seven points in math. All of these benefits—and one loss for one age cohort in one city—occurred after just one year, a very short time to expect results.

The teachers' unions and their allies will repeat as often and as

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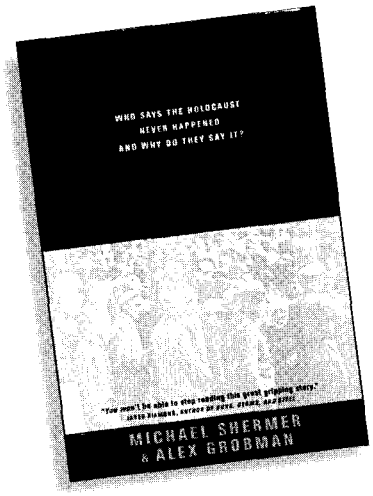

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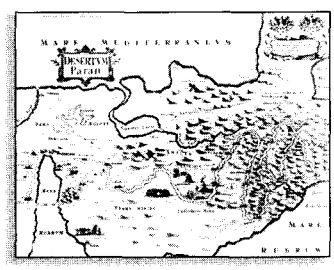

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loudly as they can the falsehood that no reputable study of voucher programs shows that choice works. Luckily, the facts speak even more loudly and insistently.

Manhattan Institute
New York City

JOHN E. COONS:

I share Gary Rosen's well-tempered views and wish to offer a complementary observation.

Among the critics of school vouchers, one goal is salient: the transmission of democratic values. For this, the poor are said to be unreliable decision-makers. They must, therefore, submit to the public-school system in the name of a more general respect for law and civic virtue.

But, in fact, school choice honors this same objective, and it is precisely in the quest for civic community that vouchers might be most effective. Consider the rather ordinary example of Kansas City, where the federal court, for want of white students, was unable to effect desegregation in the public-school system.

The black plaintiffs in the case secured an offer of 4,000 racially integrated places from 50 local private schools, the admission of students to be determined by lottery. To fund this effort, they asked the court to order the Kansas City public-school system to issue vouchers covering tuitions averaging one-third of the district's own per-pupil costs. Siding with the ACLU, the teachers' union, and the school board, the judge refused to vindicate the plaintiffs' right to "equal protection" under the 14th Amendment.

This outcome hardly encourages responsibility among disadvantaged minorities, who need to experience concrete expressions of social trust. When these families are offered substantial autonomy, they will have reason to reciprocate, assimilating civic virtue to the extent that America respects their own culture and values.

School of Law (Boalt Hall)
University of California
Berkeley, California

Gary Rosen

THESE CANNOT be easy days for Bob Chase and Sandra Feldman, or for the teachers' unions they lead. All across the country, education reformers are gaining ground, instituting policies and programs against which the NEA and AFT have long fought. Standardized testing is on the rise, with parents and politicians increasingly determined to hold schools accountable for the results. Localities are experimenting with merit pay, simpler certification requirements, and restrictions on seniority privileges in an effort to attract more and better teachers. And public-school systems in general are turning to a number of non-union arrangements, from charter schools to for-profit education companies, to bolster student performance and give families more options.

But for all the energy that the teachers' unions have expended—and continue to expend—on resisting these salutary changes, no proposed reform has drawn their vehement and organized opposition in quite the same way that vouchers have. This is not just for the obvious reason that vouchers directly threaten the livelihood of many of the public-school teachers whom the NEA and AFT represent. More fundamentally, it is because vouchers deeply *embarrass* the unions, shining an unrelenting spotlight on their self-serving claim to speak for the educational interests of the most disadvantaged students.

The parents of these students, it turns out, are wildly enthusiastic about vouchers, and rightly see them as the only real chance their children have to escape from failing inner-city public schools. As I reported in my article, overwhelming majorities of urban blacks and Latinos now endorse vouchers. Indeed, every school-choice program to date, public or private, has drawn far more applicants than it can begin to accept, the most impressive case in this regard being the 1.25 *million* children, all from low-income households, who applied last year for the 40,000 stipends offered by the privately run Children's Scholarship Fund.

EXPLAINING WHY this large and growing interest in vouchers should not be accommodated is a delicate task, not least because of the exceedingly sympathetic character of the parents and students clamoring for more educational options. Still, the teachers' unions and their staunchest allies—nicely represented here by Ralph G. Neas of People for the American Way, Steven R. Shapiro of the ACLU, and Michael W. Apple of the education school at the University of Wisconsin—have come up with two basic strategies, both of them on full display in their letters.

The first strategy—and the one on which I concentrated in my article—is to describe in indignant detail the various social and political horrors that supposedly await us should the use of publicly funded vouchers for inner-city children become more widespread. Unfortunately, this can be achieved only by resorting to a slew of evasions, misrepresentations, and outright falsehoods.

There is, to begin with, the question of finances. Bob Chase wonders how anyone could want to deprive Milwaukee's public schools of the $40 million in state aid now spent on the city's 8,000 voucher students. What he fails to explain is why a public-school system should so desperately need—or be allowed to keep—money that has been earmarked for children whom it no longer enrolls or has the expense of educating. Under a voucher program, students simply go elsewhere with some portion of the public funds that have already been designated for them. In the case of Milwaukee, this amounts to $5,000 per voucher student, far less than the approximately $9,000 that the public schools would otherwise spend. To my mind, that is a pretty good deal: better schooling for less money.

Mr. Chase is correct that certain "fixed costs" remain unchanged

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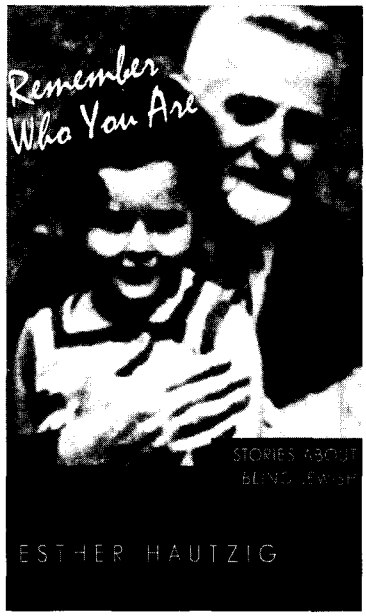

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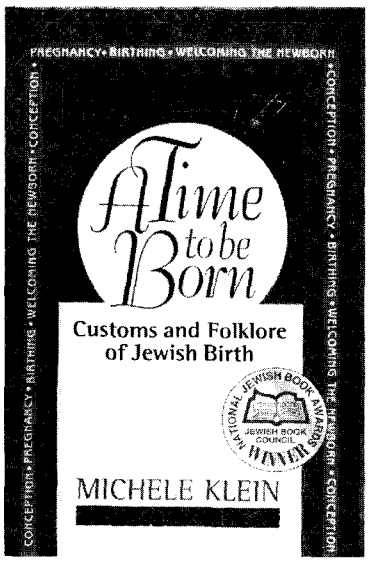
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when just a few voucher students leave a public school. But this is an argument for *expanding* voucher programs, since a greater number of participants would make it easier for an affected public-school district to consolidate resources for those students who remain in the system. Needless to say, Mr. Chase and his union have unconditionally rejected every proposal to experiment with vouchers on a larger and more efficient scale, even when such proposals have included the promise of additional money for the public schools. Evidently, the NEA's primary concern is not to safeguard funds for students but rather to preserve jobs for teachers.

Mr. Chase's next bogeyman is the charge that, under any full-fledged voucher plan, private schools would inevitably "do all the choosing," with the best schools taking only the most desirable students. After all, he says, just look at what happened in New Zealand! More relevant, one might think, is the actual record of the private schools now serving our most disadvantaged students, especially the Catholic schools, which, far from rejecting two-thirds of their applicants, as Mr. Chase blithely asserts, basically operate under a policy of open admissions. (I leave aside his remark about the invidious admissions policies of "exclusive" private schools, since Groton, Exeter, and the like do not usually figure prominently in the plans of inner-city parents.)

More importantly still, under the publicly funded voucher programs that now exist, the question of selectivity is moot. All of them require participating schools to accept any interested voucher student; when demand exceeds available space, enrollment is determined by lottery. One might hope that such requirements, along with the fact that every publicly funded voucher program to date has been targeted at low-income families, would be enough to allay the fears of the AFT's Sandra Feldman, who claims to "know a lot" about education and poverty, both "personally and professionally," and yet insists, without an iota of evidence, that vouchers will "produce greater social stratification."

THE SPECIAL concern of Ralph Neas is "accountability," and he regales us with lurid instances of the abuses that have occurred in a handful of voucher schools. It would not be difficult, however, to compile a still more outrageous catalogue of the abuses that take place every day, and on a far wider scale, in our inner-city *public* schools. The difference, as Steven E. Plaut suggests in his letter (and as I argued, *pace* Mr. Plaut, in my article), is that parents in troubled voucher schools can choose to send their children elsewhere; low-income public-school parents have no such recourse.

Then, too, there are the First Amendment issues raised by the use of vouchers at religious schools. After helpfully reminding us that such institutions actually teach religion, Steven Shapiro chides me for failing to discuss *PEARL* v. *Nyquist*, a case in which the Supreme Court struck down a program similar to today's voucher experiments. But *Nyquist* was decided in the early 1970's, in the immediate wake of the landmark decision in *Lemon*, and it, too, is a reflection of the relatively brief era when the Justices, as I wrote, "automatically [found] the 'establishment' of religion in any program that somehow benefit[ed] a sectarian institution."

Thankfully, I pointed out, the Court has become considerably less doctrinaire on this issue over the past two decades, and in a long series of cases has shown its willingness to allow sectarian institutions to receive public dollars through various indirect means. Contrary to Mr. Shapiro, it makes all the constitutional difference in the world that vouchers, in addition to being available for both religious *and* secular schools, are spent by parents, based on their private decisions. This is hardly a "charade," as he would have it, and it no doubt helps to explain why the Justices passed up an opportunity to review the Wisconsin Supreme Court's 1998 decision upholding the constitutionality of the Milwaukee voucher program.

Finally, the foes of vouchers offer a catch-all criticism perhaps best described as (to borrow a phrase) the "vast right-wing conspiracy" interpretation of education reform. This is what Mr. Chase has in mind when he speaks darkly of the "winners" and "losers" in our free-market system and then imagines a future in which vouchers are made available not just to the poor but "to any American family, regardless of income." Michael Apple is more explicit, condemning vouchers and their conservative supporters as agents of "a larger and quite aggressive ideological movement" bent on reducing the very idea of American citizenship to "consumer choice" and "selfish individualism."

These dire warnings make for colorful rhetoric, but they have nothing to do with the issue at hand. On another occasion it might be worthwhile to discuss the merits of making vouchers available to somewhat better-off families (like, for instance, middle-class Jewish parents struggling to pay day-school tuition) or even of entirely "voucherizing" public support for education (as Milton Friedman has long advocated). But such proposals have never made much political headway, and are unlikely to do so anytime soon. For now and the foreseeable future, the only debate about vouchers of any practical significance concerns their value as a tool for improving the educational prospects of low-income, inner-city families, the people for whom every existing program has been designed. By pointing with alarm to the unrealistic possibility of vouchers for everyone, Messrs. Chase and Apple intend to divert us from the fact that they would give vouchers to no one, including the most disadvantaged.

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IF THE first major strategy of voucher foes is to place school choice itself in as sinister a light as possible, the second is exemplified by the letter of Sandra Feldman. "I am not ideological about vouchers," says the ferociously ideological head of the AFT, but the case for them "is just not there," especially as compared with a range of other education reforms, all of which, she assures us, her union is eager to promote. For his part, Mr. Chase chimes in that the NEA, too, is prepared to challenge the "indefensible and unacceptable" "status quo" in urban public education.

The problem, of course, is that Bob Chase, Sandra Feldman, and their unions *are* the status quo in urban public education. If these deeply troubled school systems are to improve in any meaningful way, it will require far more than reform-minded sloganeering on the part of the powerful organizations that have long presided over them. It will require a transformation of the entire political and economic context in which inner-city schools operate.

The fact is that, for every urban public school that has done admirable work with intensive programs like SAGE or "Success for All," there are dozens of others that have just given up on their students. And for all of Sandra Feldman's bold talk about "closing down" or "redesigning" failing schools, this seldom if ever happens, largely because of the altogether predictable resistance of the teachers' unions and their entrenched allies on school boards and in mayors' offices. As things stand now, there is simply no price to be paid in most of our cities for complacently sitting atop a failed public-school system.

A voucher program dramatically alters this monopolistic situation, giving low-income parents some genuine leverage and making it much more difficult for public-school bureaucracies to ignore their needs. With vouchers, poor families who are unhappy with their children's education can do more than squawk; they can leave. For a number of our worst-performing school systems, this threat has already proved to be a potent tonic.

In Milwaukee, which has the largest and oldest of the state-supported voucher programs, school choice has been accompanied, not coincidentally, by a series of ambitious reforms in the public schools. John Gardner, the citywide director of the school board, credits competition from vouchers for the school district's efforts to expand early-childhood education, adopt new reading curricula, provide more before- and after-school programs, strengthen graduation requirements, and decentralize hiring and budget authority. As Gardner sees it, vouchers have supplied "a necessary stimulus and external pressure to make us do our job." Indeed, over the last five years, Milwaukee's public schools have posted significant gains in student performance, especially in reading and writing.

THAT BIG-CITY school systems in general stand to benefit greatly from such competition could be contested only by an interested party like Sandra Feldman, who accuses me of "distorting data" about public education but who herself cooks up some very dubious numbers. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress, for instance, the yawning test-score gap between black and white students has closed not 50 percent over the last 30 years, as she crows, but just under 20 percent, and still leaves black students 3.5 times less likely to possess proficiency in reading. For the record—and to put the AFT's self-congratulation in perspective—it is worth recalling that in our urban public schools today, most fourth graders cannot make their way through *Winnie the Pooh*, most eighth graders cannot make correct change, and most entering high-school students never graduate.

Needless to say, by emphasizing the usefulness of vouchers in sparking public-school reform, I do not mean to detract from the vital opportunities that they provide more directly. As Howard Fuller observes in his illuminating letter—and knows firsthand as one of the architects of Milwaukee's program—vouchers give low-income parents a much-needed measure of the educational freedom long taken for granted by wealthier families. That this freedom has served them well, in terms of both student performance and parental satisfaction, is demonstrated by the substantial body of research that Mr. Fuller, Robert Holland, and Jay P. Greene capably summarize—research whose conclusions, incidentally, are every bit as robust as those supporting smaller class size, a reform whose warm embrace by the teachers' unions may have something to do with the fact that it would entail the hiring of thousands of new union teachers. My thanks, too, to John E. Coons for describing how vouchers can bolster both racial integration and the civic commitments of inner-city families.

Finally, I would say to Yale M. Zussman and Frederic Wile that I do appreciate the formidable cultural obstacles that stand in the way of improving urban education, and to Todd Kadish and Bill Tanksley that I entertain no illusions about the risks involved in voucher programs, especially for the private schools that agree to participate in them. Still, I see no real alternative for inducing wide-scale change in how children are educated in our inner cities. Whatever their drawbacks or limitations, this much is certain about vouchers: they create a constructive and far-reaching dynamic in urban schooling, pushing the issue of reform to the forefront not only for parents and students but also, as the letters above suggest, for the increasingly defensive and heretofore unaccountable representatives of the educational status quo.

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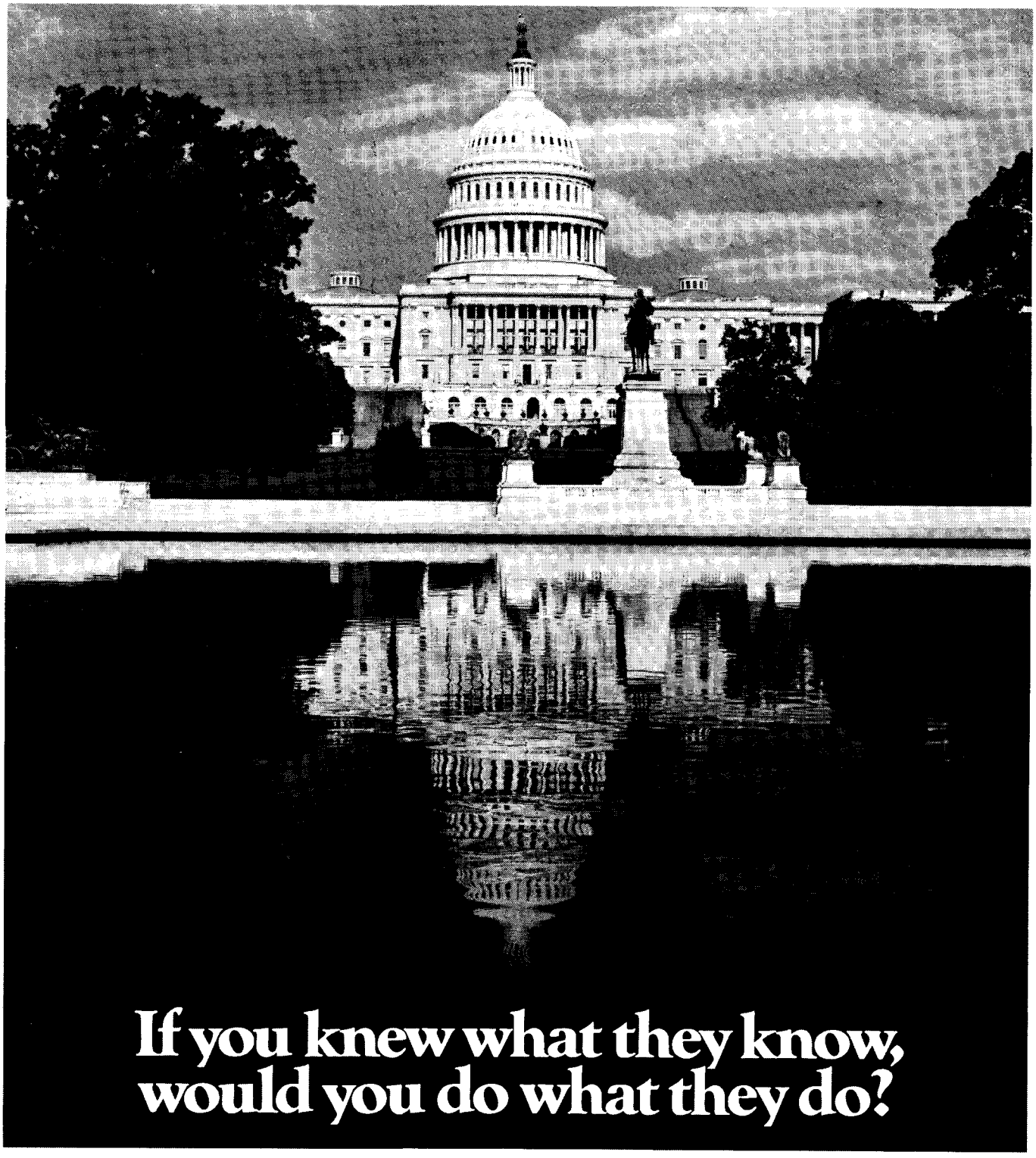

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Commentary
June 2000

How Elijah Muhammad Won

Daniel Pipes

In the early 1930's, when the Nation of Islam had just come into existence, its founder made the bold prediction that, one day, Islam would replace Christianity as the primary faith of black Americans. At the time, this assertion must have sounded incredible, if not slightly mad; not only was the Islamic faith broadly despised in the United States, but African-Americans who were Muslim numbered at that time only in the dozens. By 1959, however, a perverse endorsement of this same prediction would issue from, of all people, a top leader of the Ku Klux Klan. In a letter to the New York City police commissioner, that white supremacist wrote: "If we fail to stop the Muslims now, the sixteen million niggers of America will soon be Muslims, and you will never be able to stop them."

Today, that 1930's prediction no longer seems so outlandish—indeed, it has already been partially borne out. About one million African-Americans now identify themselves as Muslims, and a visit to the black sections of any fair-sized American town quickly confirms the presence not only of an Islamic infrastructure—mosques, schools, *halal* butchers, stores carrying Islamic clothing—but of an active and ambitious drive to propagate Islam. So vital is this movement that the director of a Christian effort to stem its headway has made a memorable prediction of his own: "If the conversion rate continues unchanged, Islam could become the dominant religion in black urban areas by the year 2020."

Is there a single figure most responsible for the remarkable career of Islam among African-Americans? Undoubtedly, the most common reply to this question would name the man who was born as Malcolm Little and died as El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz, and is best known as Malcolm X (1925-65). Charismatic, eloquent, honest, a martyred seeker of true faith, Malcolm X did play a major role in the development of black Islam, and to this day many American blacks cite his 1964 *Autobiography* as a powerful factor in their own conversion to the faith. Yet Malcolm X's active career as a Muslim lasted not much over a decade; his real contribution lies elsewhere, as an apostle of secular black nationalism. Today, he is a pop-culture icon, his memory kept alive by Spike Lee's movie about him and by baseball caps sporting his "X," T-shirts emblazoned with his face, and a U.S. postal stamp in his honor.

In the final analysis, it was another man, Malcolm X's mentor, who had the greater impact on establishing Islam among African-Americans. This was the uncharismatic, inarticulate, heterodox, and long-lived Elijah Muhammad. During his lifetime—he was born in 1897 and died in 1975—he was a mysterious figure, the subject of rumor and innuendo.

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He told contradictory stories about himself, avoided the press, surrounded himself with a wall of bodyguards, and punished those who revealed information about him. But recent scholarship has pieced together his story, mostly thanks to law-enforcement records. For, starting in 1932 and continuing for over four decades, police agencies kept extremely close tabs on him, including (as part of the controversial COINTELPRO program) by means of extensive FBI wiretaps and letter-openings. The resulting reports, now available to researchers in all their immensity—the FBI's papers alone amount to well over a million pages—reveal the most intimate secrets of Elijah Muhammad's household, his power struggles, and his personal and sexual escapades.

Two authors, both black, have done yeoman work culling these archives (as well as other relevant documents), and have produced impressively researched biographies of the man who liked to be called the Messenger of Allah. Claude Andrew Clegg III's *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad** appeared in 1997; a well-rounded biography by a professor of history, it is also perhaps the best book ever written on the Nation of Islam. And now there is also *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad*,† by Karl Evanzz, a journalist at the *Washington Post*; depending heavily on the police files, Evanzz provides more new information but also a somewhat skewed picture, since he tends to neglect matters (like theology) with which the FBI did not concern itself.

As it happens, the two biographers disagree on a dismaying number of details, which suggests that much work on this topic remains to be done. In the main, though, their accounts complement each other and make it possible, for the first time, to understand who exactly Elijah Muhammad was.

HE WAS born Elija Pool in Sandersville, Georgia, in 1897, the seventh of thirteen children. Georgia at that time was a racist, violent place, and young Elija grew up with searing experiences of white scorn and brutality. The lynching of a friend in 1912 prompted him to flee his parent's house a year later. In 1917 he met Clara Belle Evans and in 1919 married her; between 1921 and 1939, they had eight children.

Pool fled Georgia for Detroit in 1923 and then, in the classic pattern of black migration to the north, called for his family to follow. In Detroit, he worked in several industrial plants and joined a variety of organizations—notably, Marcus Garvey's proto-black-nationalist movement, the United Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and the Black Shriners; but neither of these kept his allegiance. After an arrest for drunkenness in 1926, Elija Pool became Elijah Poole, the change in spelling intended to symbolize the desire for a fresh start in life.

In a further effort to improve himself, Poole also joined the Moorish Science Temple of America (MSTA) and converted to its vaguely Islam-like religion, becoming intensely involved in the institution and in spreading its doctrines. This strangely named organization had little in common with the standard version of Islam coming from the Middle East, but it was the first to forge a 20th-century link between that religion and African-Americans. Founded in 1913 by a Black Shriner named Timothy Drew (who renamed himself Noble Drew Ali), the MSTA introduced such Islam-like features as the crescent-and-star motif, the use of Arabic personal names, and the prohibition of pork, but it also foretold the destruction of all whites and promoted Drew as a prophet.

The MSTA went into a steep decline with Drew's death in July 1929, and Elijah Poole was among the many who quit. In the ensuing struggle for power, three major factions emerged, all based in Chicago. One was led by a very recent convert named David Ford, who quickly moved to Detroit and renamed both himself (Wallace D. Fard) and his faction—the Allah Temple of Islam (ATI). This new sect retained many of the MSTA's peculiar customs and ideas, but it also introduced new elements, including the theme that whites are devils and a paramilitary unit called the Fruit of Islam.

In early 1931, Elijah Poole met Fard and quickly became his enthusiastic disciple, receiving in return the "original" name of Elijah Karriem. A year later, Fard further rewarded Elijah by making him Supreme Master of the ATI and changing his name yet again, this time to Elijah Muhammad. Over the course of their three-year partnership, Fard and Elijah Muhammad also elevated Fard's own theological status—from Allah's Messiah to Allah himself—with Muhammad taking over the role of Messenger.

The ATI horrified the Detroit police, especially after one of its members ritualistically killed a man. Making a deal with Fard, the authorities let him out of a psychiatric ward on condition he shut down the ATI; Fard agreed, but then tricked the police by changing the ATI's name to Nation of

* St. Martin's, 377 pp., $25.95.

† Pantheon, 667 pp., $28.50.

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Islam (NoI) and keeping it alive. He was finally forced to leave Detroit in mid-1934. Thereupon, Muhammad attempted to take control of the NoI, but he met with considerable opposition and was forced to flee to avoid being killed. His first stop was Chicago, then Milwaukee, then Washington, D.C., where he lived until 1942. There he took advantage of the opportunity to educate himself at the Library of Congress and to travel throughout the East, spreading his faith.

A LIGHT-SKINNED, diminutive man, Elijah Muhammad won converts not through his eloquence—or his command of grammar—but through a soft, Southern-accented intensity that audiences found somewhat reminiscent of the manner of a black Baptist preacher (which his father had been). Although to nonbelievers it might seem hard to understand how he was able to rouse listeners to standing ovations or inspire their utter devotion, Clegg believes that he had the exact measure of his audience: "Something ineffable about this 'squeaky little man teaching hate' attracted African-Americans for an entire generation as few other leaders could."

In brief, Muhammad's message went as follows. Blacks came into existence 78 trillion years ago, and through the eons they lived an advanced and righteous life. But their paradise ceased 6,000 years ago when a deviant black savant named Mr. Yakub, also known as "the big head scientist," rebelled against the black gods and set about creating the white race. When blacks learned what Mr. Yakub was doing, they exiled him to an island in the Aegean Sea, but he was able to continue his work and within 600 years had succeeded in bringing the white race into existence, with a mandate to reign over blacks for six millennia. That reign ended in 1914, though a seventy-year period of grace would extend it to 1984; W.D. Fard had come to proclaim its end and to show blacks how to reclaim their rightful place through the Nation of Islam—a goal they would definitely accomplish by the year 2000.

This imaginative schema had the virtue of explaining both black weakness and white evil, even as it motivated blacks to prepare themselves through discipline and hard work to seize power. But as a theology, it differed almost diametrically from core Islamic beliefs. In his worst nightmare, a Muslim could hardly imagine a religion more repugnant to his own than one that identified God with a human being, excluded most of humanity on racial grounds, believed in a post-Muhammadan prophet, and held the Qur'an to be an imperfect, temporary document. Compared with these basic principles, such NoI practices as the avoidance of pork, intermittent study of Arabic, and separation of the sexes were but minor details. The NoI offered a folk religion with strong Christian overtones and hints of science fiction. It had little in common with standard Islam. In the intervening seven decades it has moved in that direction, but not by much.

MUHAMMAD HATED the United States and loved its enemies, especially non-Caucasian ones. And so he rejoiced in the Japanese victory at Pearl Harbor in 1941, not only refusing to register for military service but instructing his followers to do likewise. Arrested for draft evasion in May 1942, he spent three years in jail on sedition charges, getting out in August 1946. The Nation had been kept alive during those years—barely—by his wife Clara and other faithful acolytes; on leaving prison, he found fewer than 400 active members. It was at this low point that Malcolm X turned up and, as Evanzz puts it, "gave new life to the Messenger."

Malcolm X joined the NoI in late 1948. After his release from jail in 1952, he devoted himself full-time to building the organization, and with great success. Members began to flow in—one notable newcomer, Louis Farrakhan, was recruited in 1955 by both Muhammad and Malcolm X—new temples and schools were opened, and a number of small commercial enterprises (a bakery, grocery store, restaurant) were established. The Nation also bought real estate, both urban and rural. The money added up, and it soon became the richest-ever black organization in the United States. In 1959, the national media discovered the NoI: Mike Wallace's television documentary, *The Hate that Hate Produced*, appalled whites but evidently thrilled many blacks, thousands of whom joined up as new members.

The NoI's new wealth and stature also provided access to foreign leaders, and its dignitaries were soon in direct contact with such stars of the anti-American firmament as Sukarno of Indonesia, Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and Fidel Castro of Cuba. In 1959, Muhammad confirmed these burgeoning relationships in a triumphal tour of the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, including a pilgrimage to Mecca that implied Saudi acceptance of his legitimacy as a Muslim. (Although many observers at the time suspected foreign governments of funding the NoI—Thurgood Marshall dismissed it as "a bunch of thugs organized from prisons and jails, and financed, I am sure, by [Egyptian president Gamal Abdel] Nasser or some Arab group"—

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in point of fact serious foreign funding arrived only in the 1970's from Libya, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi.)

But then, just as everything was looking good, rot set in: "rumors of oppressive disciplinary practices, deviations from the moral code, and financial irregularities," as Evanzz describes it. From the start, the NoI had been steeped in violence; I have already mentioned the "ritual sacrifice" that took place in 1932, when the organization was still called the Allah Temple of Islam. Through the decades, NoI members who presumed to disagree with Muhammad were injured or killed, a trend that culminated after 1960 with the assassination of Malcolm X (1965) and the murder of seven members of the Khaalis family (1973). Nor were whites immune: the notorious "Zebra" murders left nine dead in Illinois in 1972, and a year later a squad known as the Death Angels killed fourteen in the San Francisco area. And these were only the most spectacular atrocities.

Moral deviations likewise began in 1960: Elijah Muhammad's first illegitimate child was born in January of that year, the first of thirteen unrecognized children whom he fathered over a seven-year period with no fewer than seven different mistresses. FBI tapes record Muhammad handing each woman the same line about his "divine seed," then lying about his marital intentions; the FBI also found that he had five affairs going simultaneously, and that he threatened women with violence if they revealed his paternity. To his wife's special shame, among these relationships was an incestuous one.

Nor was this all. Newly affluent, Muhammad lavished luxuries on himself and the "royal" family, as it came to be known. He traveled in a Lockheed executive jet, wore a jewel-studded fez said to be worth $150,000, and let his family milk the NoI for all it was worth. In Clegg's careful words, this focus on money "ultimately validated, by example, a trend toward materialism, even avarice, that would hamper the Nation as a religious organization."

It is hard to convey just how shocking Muhammad's actions, especially his sexual ones, were to members of the moralistic NoI. His son Wallace later endeavored to explain it by saying that Elijah Muhammad had "been worshipped as the final prophet of God for so long that he had convinced himself that it was true," and helped himself to the liberties his status seemed to confer. But his behavior caused severe strains, putting the organization's very existence in jeopardy and forming perhaps the single most important reason for the rift with the upright Malcolm X.

Other consequences followed as well. Once he became the captive of his own avarice, Muhammad developed an operational timidity that was quite at odds with his fire-breathing rhetoric. He refused to sanction any response to police intrusions into NoI temples, and even took part in discussions with Ku Klux Klan leaders toward an arrangement whereby the NoI would stay out of "non-Negro" areas in return for the Klan's leaving NoI members alone. The head of the American Nazi party, George Lincoln Rockwell, was invited to speak at the NoI's main annual event, and used the occasion to laud Elijah Muhammad as the black Adolf Hitler (high praise, in his view).

To cap it off, Muhammad was entering into a slow process of physical deterioration, and this led to a protracted battle over his succession. In the end, there were just two contestants, his son Wallace and his national spokesman Louis Farrakhan. (The rupture with Malcolm X had ended with the latter's assassination by Muhammad's goons, apparently supervised by Farrakhan.) Each advanced his cause in imaginative ways—for example, Farrakhan married two of his daughters to Muhammad's nephew and grandson. But when Elijah Muhammad finally died in February 1975, Wallace hurriedly called a news conference and announced that his father had appointed him sole successor, and Farrakhan temporarily acquiesced.

Wallace undertook a thorough refashioning of the movement, purging it of its heterodox elements and turning it almost overnight into an Islamic institution that still exists; its current name is the Muslim American Society, and its membership is said to number around 200,000. He also dismantled the Fruit of Islam, sold the commercial establishments, and spun off most of the infrastructure. Farrakhan, going along for a while, Arabized his first name (to Abdul Halim), studied Arabic and the Qur'an, and grew a beard. But it is clear that he disagreed with the changes initiated by Wallace, and in 1978 he mustered the resolve to split off and start his own competing organization, a revived Nation of Islam.

FOR OVER two decades, Wallace—who today goes by the name of W. Deen Mohammed—and Louis Farrakhan have been bitter rivals. They make for an interesting contrast. Both born in 1933, they have known each other for over forty years but in terms of personality could hardly be less alike. W. Deen Mohammed is scholarly, and perhaps too intellectual to be a mass leader. Louis Farrakhan is an entertainer by training who be-

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came a brilliant orator and polemicist, given to extremist rhetoric that has regularly included a strong dose of anti-Semitism. He dominates his organization and thrives on controversy.

Fundamentally, the issue over which the two men have fought is which of them is the true son and heir to Elijah Muhammad. If W. Deen has the obvious biological advantage, Farrakhan married into the "royal family" and won many of its members to his side, and he also has remained far more faithful to Elijah Muhammad's basic message. The back cover of one of W. Deen Mohammed's books, *Islam's Climate for Business Success*, proclaims him "the foremost leader of *Muslims* throughout America and in many other parts of the world" (emphasis added). Farrakhan, by contrast, has few specifically Islamic aspirations; instead, he has sought recognition as the most powerful leader of American *blacks*.

In any case, the rivalry between the two men, which had gone on almost unchanged for decades, has now rather suddenly ended, or at least altered. In February of this year, exactly a quarter-century after the death of Elijah Muhammad, Louis Farrakhan and W. Deen Mohammed embraced, and proclaimed their intention of working together. The change, whether tactical or real, has been mutual. Politically, W. Deen Mohammed, who began solidly in the mainstream of the American spectrum, has in recent years adopted more radical stances (perhaps in an effort to ingratiate himself with immigrant Muslims) and in this respect has moved in Farrakhan's direction. Religiously, Farrakhan for his part has increasingly endorsed, if somewhat ambiguously, the reforms initiated by Wallace a quarter-century earlier. At their February meeting, specifically, he accepted the seventh-century Muhammad as the Seal of the Prophets. (It remains to be seen, however, exactly what Farrakhan had in mind when he announced that "Allah sent Muhammad with the final revelation to the world." Which Allah, the omnipresent one or the human one? Which Muhammad, the Meccan or the Georgian?)

There still remains a profusion of other groups that continue to purvey the old unadulterated NoI message, but Farrakhan's decision to join forces with Muhammad, however clouded in its meaning, does signify a certain weakness and also points to a trend. As long ago as 1962, the author of a book-length study of the NoI noted that few who joined the Nation remained in it for very long. If that was true almost 40 years ago, it is even more true today. As blacks discover when they join and inevitably come into closer contact with the real thing, the NoI, whatever its claims to legitimacy, purveys a jumble of primitive and unsustainable myths with no connection to standard Islam. A folk religion founded in Detroit in the 1930's can hardly stand up to a religion with nearly fourteen centuries of history, nearly a billion adherents, 50 national governments to its name, and one of the world's great civilizations.

A number of other factors tend toward the NoI's eventual demise as well. Each of its many splinter groups, including Farrakhan's, is centered around a dominant figure and amounts to "little more," as Evanzz says, "than a cult of personality." When these aging leaders are gone, he continues, "all that will remain is a storefront temple here and there." Also relevant is the NoI's emphasis on hard work, thrift, and the family: this emphasis inculcates exactly the sort of habits that permit NoI members to escape poverty, but as they rise economically, they often seek a less sectarian faith. Some return to Christianity; more move on to standard Islam.

But this, too, must be counted as part of the legacy of the redoubtable Elijah Muhammad. For all his foibles and failures, he clearly altered the course of black culture and politics. As Clegg notes:

> The Muslims were "black" before it became fashionable to be labeled as such, and the Black Power Movement and all subsequent African-American protest styles, from the rhymes of the nationalistic rap group Public Enemy to the raison d'être of the Million Man March, are undeniably offshoots of the legacy of Elijah Muhammad.

True, the wilder notions of Muhammad's religion are disappearing; but all African-American Muslims today can claim him as their patron, for nearly every one of them has a direct connection, personal or familial, to the NoI. Without Muhammad, the million or so African-Americans who are now Muslims would almost certainly still be Christians.

Their numbers, moreover, are only likely to grow. Though Islam still exercises only modest appeal to white Americans, it has become a powerful and permanent presence among blacks, who by my rough calculation are 200 times more likely to convert to it than are whites. Nor is it hard to imagine such conversions beginning to cascade, in an Islamic pattern that, as the historian Richard Bulliet has established, goes back over a millennium. If that happens, Islam may well pull ahead of Christianity among blacks within a matter of decades.

There are signs of such momentum already.

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The Arabic name Malik, for example, has become one of the most popular given names for newborn black American boys, and in some years *the* most popular. In black culture, according to one scholar, "all African-American youths have at least some familiarity with Islam, either through a personal encounter, a relative, a friend, a fashionable item of apparel, or, as is more frequently the case today, in the form of rap music poems." Under this last heading, consider that such rap performers as Ice Cube, King Sun, KMD, Movement X, Queen Latifa, Poor Righteous Teachers, Prince Akeem, Sister Souljah, and Tribe Called Quest have all supported Farrakhan. A still more aggressive NoI offshoot named the Five Percenters claims the allegiance of Grand Puba, Big Daddy Kane, Lakim Shabazz, and Eric B. and Rakim. In the view of Farrakhan's biographer Mattias Gardell, the "hip-hop movement's role in popularizing the message of black militant Islam cannot be overestimated."

Among non-Muslim blacks, the enviable reputation enjoyed by Islam is traceable in good part to the discipline it is thought to impose on young men, thereby addressing what may be the black community's number-one problem. A Baptist woman whose son converted has succinctly expressed this favorable disposition:

> This Islam sounds like true religion to me. They don't believe in smoking dope, drinking liquor and no adultery. I say we could use more teaching like that. . . . When my son reached over to be a Muslim, I was not going to fault him. I enjoy listening to him talk about it, and how it came out of Africa, and that sounds pretty good.

FROM A social point of view, indeed, the newfound sobriety and seriousness of African-American converts to Islam, whether to the NoI or the standard version, are all to the good. Though violence and recidivism remain very real problems among these new Muslims—the recent arrest of Jamil Al-Amin (the former H. Rap Brown) on charges of having murdered a policeman in Atlanta is a case in point—the manly atmosphere of convert Islam has helped many ex-convicts and others at the bottom of society to find the straight path and stick to it.

From a political point of view, however, things are much less positive. Black converts generally tend to adopt extremist views. Those in the Nation of Islam become black nationalists, pumped up with incendiary antiwhite rhetoric, while those who join standard Islam often become Islamists—admirers of such figures as the Ayatollah Khomeini and Usama bin Ladin. Whether followers of the NoI or standard Islam, moreover, black converts tend to hold vehemently anti-American, anti-Christian, and anti-Semitic attitudes.

It does not take much imagination to see that, should Islam in fact replace Christianity as the primary religion of African-Americans, this will have vast significance for all Americans, affecting everything from race relations to foreign policy, from popular culture to issues of religion and state. Eric Lincoln, a leading authority on African-American Islam, once wrote that the Nation of Islam might "well change the course of history in the West." Should that come to pass, the credit, or blame, will belong above all to the "squeaky little man teaching hate," Elijah Muhammad.

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Messages from the Genome

Arthur B. Cody

GENETICS IS the new science. Every day, something fascinating appears in the newspapers or on television, in magazines or books, in connection with the genetic engineering of crops and animals, the Human Genome Project and all that it portends for our future, or the imminent conquest of human disease through gene therapy. The last-named of these has become especially salient lately with the report from France of success in treating an immune disorder by adding working genes to cells. But whatever the specific subject may be, the cornerstone of almost every story about the science of genetics is the central significance of the DNA molecule—the genome—that contains the complete set of instructions for making an organism.

The concept is, indeed, astounding. No matter how many times you encounter the notion that from a small set of chromosomes—tiny objects that can be seen only under extreme magnification—a fly or a whale is constructed, it remains staggeringly hard to take in. But you would not know this from reading the journalists and researchers who interpret the new science for us. To them, there is little that is incomprehensible about the process. We may be ignorant of details, to be sure, but our ignorance, we are assured, is rapidly evaporating. The theory is sound and proved, the research proceeds apace, the authorities have spoken. And what they have told us is that, though the information contained in the genome is immense, we know how it works, and we stand on the verge of controlling it.

Item: In early April, the papers carry a story about the Monsanto Corporation's having arrived at "a working draft" of the genetic code of the rice plant. Obviously, if rice, which is eaten regularly by most people in the world, can be redesigned in ways to make it hardier, healthier, or tastier, it will do a lot of people good (in addition to making Monsanto a lot of money). What does a "working draft" involve? "By analogy," a researcher is quoted as saying, "think of an encyclopedia of how to construct a rice plant made up of 100 volumes, each with 1,000 pages and with 1,000 words to a page." Monsanto printed out all these pages, albeit with some errors and gaps. The volumes contain the information, the information is vast, and this information constructs the rice plant. Q.E.D.

Item: The lead story in the October 1999 *National Geographic* is entitled "Secrets of the Gene." It mainly concerns the potential (for both good and evil) that we will have to deal with when the results of the Human Genome Project come in. In it, the director of the Sanger Center, a major research laboratory, asserts: "All the information required to make a human being is written into our DNA." And he goes on: "We can even put an upper limit on the size of it—about one gigabyte [a billion characters]

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of data. Your entire genome will easily fit on the hard disk of your desktop." Again: the informational capacity of the genome is huge; being "written," the information is readable; and it is all that is required to construct an organism.

Item: In *The Origins of Life*, a book published last year, the evolutionary biologists John Maynard Smith and Eörs Szathmáry declare that, when it comes to making an elephant, "what we can say . . . is approximately how many base pairs"—the chemical bases in the DNA that carry the gene code—"are actually used." True, there are lots of unused stretches of DNA; true, too, the base pairs do not always combine with maximum mathematical efficiency. But the genome of elephants, like that of all mammals, is about one gigabyte of data in size, and it does the job.

Item: In *Genome*,* the most recent of his three books on evolution and human nature, the science writer Matt Ridley proclaims ours to be a lucky generation, for we will be the first "to read the book that is our genome." Just how abundant is that genome? As long, Ridley writes, as 800 bibles—"a gigantic document, an immense book, a recipe of extravagant length." (This is another way of saying: one gigabyte.) Reading the book of our genome, moreover, "will tell us more about our origins, our evolution, our nature, and our minds than all the efforts of science to date."

Why so much stress on the size of the genome? Clearly, building an organism requires a tremendous amount of information, and that information must come from somewhere. As Ridley puts it: "Something, somewhere must be imposing a pattern of increasing detail upon the egg as it grows and develops. There must be a plan. But unless we are to invoke divine intervention, that imposer of detail must be within the egg itself."

Ridley's "must" expresses the assumption that all of science quite properly rests on—that explanations can appeal only to natural objects and processes. In the present context, what this means is that the capacity of the genome to construct an organism must lie both in the sheer magnitude of the information it contains and in its power to transform that information from "inputs" to "outputs." How this transformation comes about is precisely what we are told we now know for a virtual certainty. But do we? To address that question properly will require a brief immersion in scientific description.

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THE PHYSICAL capacity of the genome—that gigabyte of data—is calculated this way. In the case of mammals, there are about three billion base pairs of nucleotides, each one of which forms a rung on the twisted ladder that makes up the DNA molecule. In sets of three, those base pairs participate in a code; in the code, each set, appropriately called a codon and representing one character of data, designates a specific element of the protein eventually to be constructed by the gene. Divide three billion, the physical length of the genome, by three, the biological character called a codon, and you get one gigabyte.

As for the discrete series of codons that are the genes themselves, there are, in the mammalian genome, only about 100,000 of them, and therefore about 100,000 different kinds of proteins that are used by the body in some capacity or other. In molecular biology there is something called the central dogma: one gene, one protein. This dogma declares what it is genes do, and *all* they do. Genes, it tells us, do not code for body parts, for processes, for habits, or for instincts. All such organic and temperamental components must somehow be erected out of proteins, or whatever proteins themselves build, and the construction program for those components must be provided for in Ridley's "egg"—i.e., the genome.

And how does that construction program *work*—that is, how do we get from inputs to outputs? The genome seems to function as a vehicle of computation, systematically causing a staggering array of factors to coalesce and thereby leading in an orderly fashion to different structural configurations in an organism's complex arrangement of proteins. To perform this marvelous function, there are, over and above the somatic genes, regulatory genes that somehow control the formation of organs and appendages. The most notable of these genes are the homeotic ones, and their discovery in 1983 is described by Ridley as "probably the greatest intellectual prize that modern genetics has won since the code itself was cracked."

The important thing about regulatory genes is that their protein products do not themselves form parts of the body or join in its metabolic processes. Instead, they switch on other genes, and sometimes they switch them off. Here, for example, is how the early stages of development of a fruit fly might be described in an introductory textbook, with the regulatory genes identified in italics:

> The body formation starts with a gene (actually its protein), a morphogen called *bicoid*, that establishes the front-rear polarity of the egg;

* The subtitle is "The Autobiography of a Species in 23 Chapters." HarperCollins, 344 pp., $26.00.

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> then *segmentation* genes regulate the origin of segmentation; then *gap* genes map out the basic subdivision; then *pair-rule* genes set up modular pair segmentation; then, at last, the *homeotic* genes come along to specify the type of appendage that belongs at some body segment location.

As this paraphrase suggests, there is a hierarchy of increasing refinement that culminates in the homeotic genes. There are, in fact, hundreds of these homeotic genes, and they assist in the manufacture of a bewildering range of body and organ structures. One homeotic gene will switch on several other genes, and if they, too, happen to include a homeotic gene, that gene will in turn switch on other genes, and so forth, thus producing a "cascade" effect. In combination, as though by a polynomial formula, the mutual effects of these overlappings are modulated or expanded in an orderly fashion—a fashion that may properly be called computational.

Ridley observes that once a cell knows where it is in the organism—a feat possibly attributable to the action of earlier regulatory genes—it "looks this up in its guidebook and finds the instruction: 'grow a wing,' or 'start to become a kidney cell' or something like this." Of course, he does not mean it literally. As he proceeds to explain, "There are no computers and no guidebooks, just a series of automatic steps in which gene switches on gene which switches on gene." Nevertheless, he asserts, there is a virtue to the guidebook analogy:

> [T]he great beauty of embryo development, the bit that human beings find hard to grasp, is that it is a totally decentralized process. Since every cell in the body carries a complete copy of the genome, no cell need wait for instructions from authority; every cell can act on its own information and the signals it receives from its neighbors.

There is, in short, a sort of solipsism through which each cell conducts itself. Although it is not ignorant of its neighborhood, or indifferent to signals from its neighbors, it receives no instruction from anywhere outside itself. (This is not to exclude influences of the environment, but such influences are influential only according to the rules published in the genome.) Self-assembly—the title of Ridley's chapter on the homeotic gene—is carried out according to each cell's genomic instructions, instructions that are somehow generally available for each cell to read and decipher.

The wonder, then, is that the genome operates everywhere and always in the same way. "Flies and people are just variations on a theme of how to build a body that was laid down in some worm-like creature in the Cambrian period," writes Ridley. The genome is the creative machine working always in the identical style, no matter what the organism: yeast, lily, fly, elephant, or human.

III

NOW LET us retrace our steps, and ask again whether the genome does, in fact, possess both sufficient information and sufficient power to make an organism.

First, there is a minor correction to be made in the one-gigabyte claim. More than 90 percent of the DNA does not code for proteins, and within each DNA gene there is again another percentage that is unused. Thus, rather than a gigabyte, it may be more correct to say that there are fewer than 300 megabytes of useful data in the genome, an amount that even a vintage hard drive can manage.

Then there is a curious messiness surrounding the numbers. The number of chromosomes differs among species, and for no apparent reason. Chimpanzees have 24, one more than we do. Sheep have 26 plus the X and Y; the Muntjac, a small deer, has just two, plus an X and two Y's. Crabs have over 250. Perhaps there is no importance to this fact, but it does shake one's confidence that everything always, and everywhere, operates in a strict order.

Another confidence-shaking fact is this: the number of nucleotides in the genome also varies wildly, and again for no perceptible reason. If the human genome has three billion base pairs, the tiger lily has 100 billion, over 30 times as many; the lowly salamander has fewer than the lily, but fifteen times more than the human. How many genes do *their* genomes divide into, how much junk? The answer is not known exactly, though it is known that the little zebra fish that swims in the Ganges has 100,000 genes, just as we do, and that those genes happen to be very similar to ours.

Does any of this matter? Perhaps not. What matters, clearly, is that the base pairs, the materials of the genome, function in a way that will build an organism from scratch and without any instructional aid from outside. But consider the stupendous labor to be discharged in this task. Creating enzymes, cells, skeleton, and organs, together with the systems for their regulation; monitoring, metering, repairing, timing, orientating, sensing, and coordinating in movements designed for hunting, fleeing, breeding, seeking shelter, and so on—such a task is quite beyond our ability adequately to describe.

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Nest-building, for example—think what it involves, and remember that, as an instinctual behavior, all of it must be provided for in the genome. A timing event occurs, one coordinated with the season; courtship and mating behavior ensue; a nest must be built. A bird is not equipped with cognitive knowledge of the world: "twig," "branch," "cat," "hawk," "seed," "berry" are not given to its understanding as concepts but programmed into modules of the brain. Assuming a certain species of bird, one that eats seeds and berries, builds nests of twigs in branches and flees from cats and hawks, we can see that, without knowing what these things are, the bird is nevertheless able to get nourishment, reproduce, and escape from predators.

In nest-building, as in its other activities, the bird's brain modules must be tuned to sensory inputs, so that their vocabulary is one of light and dark, angles and colors, shimmerings, textures, scents, and accrued recollections of these elements. The bird must coordinate its flight movements of wing and tail to land near a twig, then coordinate movements of eye, leg, and beak so as to ascertain that the thing does not wiggle (that would be not a twig but a snake) and then to pick it up. It must have override mechanisms in the program so that if the twig is near a cat, no landing will take place; or so that, if the bird needs nourishment, it will eat first before collecting the twig. Once a twig is picked up, it must be flown back to the nest location, a matter of utilizing acquired memory clues of light and dark and a sense of distance, again completely without cognitive understanding. The first twig must be placed in a suitable branch for security from ground scavengers and for the engineering requirements of further construction. And so forth, and so on, and so forth, and so on again.

Think of the social behavior of ants, the web-building of spiders, the culture of elephants. Think of the growth of deciduous trees, the elaborateness of a flower's design, the intricacies of the basal bodies in the cortex of a protozoan. No need to go on: each of us knows enough about life to generate plenty of examples on our own. Even before we ask how it all works, we must confront the ineluctable fact that the labor involved is immense, while the number of genes constructing this immensity and the bytes of information they deploy are quite limited.

There are some 100 trillion cells in the human body. Inside each cell there are many vital and complex materials; the cells in turn collect in mutually dependent ways into the many organs of the body; each organ has many design components and cell types; and there are different cell stages associated with embryological development and with the mature organism. There are so many possible combinations of cellular assignments that the number quickly becomes astronomical; in fact it becomes superastronomical, to an unmanageable degree.

It is very difficult, and always artificial, to attempt to quantify biological processes. It is very difficult because one does not know what to count as units—individual molecules, cells, sets of cells (materials), or some sort of minimum functional constituent such as bone, liver, immune system. It is artificial because we are trying to quantify a living system, and we do not know the essential or permissible parameters of such systems even if we know—which we do not—how many individual elements belong to them. But for illustrative purposes we can take a whack at it.

We are helped in this regard by the late Walter Elsasser, who after a distinguished career in nuclear physics produced four books in the field of biology. In one of them, *Reflections on a Theory of Organisms* (1986, new edition 1998), he looks at the numbers. To the question, how many different cells can theoretically be compounded out of the four organic elements already fixed—carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen—his answer is, "the number is always extravagantly large." What he means by that is a number larger—in the mammalian case, much larger—than ten to the 100th power: a figure already so large as to be virtually infinite. For comparison's sake, the number of protons in the universe is estimated to be ten to the 70th power.

What does this tell us? It tells us that until we know the range of permissible cell constitutions, and the method by which that permissible range is disciplined, the alternatives the genome must control will lie on a scale whose extent is impossible to stipulate.

IV

HOW, AGAIN, does it control them? To capture the constructive power of the genome, three metaphors have been commonly invoked.

In the first, the genome is described as defining or actually making an organism's "building blocks." In a quite straightforward sense, this is correct. The genome delineates and, with the associated apparatus in the cell, makes all the proteins used in an organism. Some proteins have duties of their own—hemoglobin carries oxygen in the blood; enzymes promote chemical reactions in the cell; Titin, a 30,000-amino-acid-long protein, ties muscle fibers together—while some merge with others

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and with molecules of different kinds from fats to metals to become the substance of the organism's structures: fibers, leaves, fruit, skin, bone, brain.

In the sense that building blocks are what buildings are made of, the genome makes building blocks. But the trouble with the building-block metaphor is that it suggests nothing about the *dynamics* of construction, or of use. It is not a bad metaphor as far as it goes, but it does not go very far.

The second metaphor is that of a blueprint. This figures regularly in many popularized renditions of contemporary genetics (as in *Newsweek*'s April 10 cover story about the Human Genome Project). The image of a blueprint seems fitting because blueprints prefigure the object pictured and in so doing specify the relationships of its elements. More importantly, the design is read as a set of instructions: make it come to pass that the object looks like *this*. Ridley, however, forswears the use of this metaphor because blueprints are two-dimensional maps, not one-dimensional codes, and because "each part of a blueprint makes an equivalent part of the machine or building; each sentence of a recipe book does not make a different mouthful of cake." These are trenchant criticisms.

And there is a more fundamental difficulty with the blueprint metaphor. In the genome, there is no reader, no agent to be instructed and to follow directions. It is the machinist who knows his mill and drilling machines, who knows his materials and how they can be cut and shaped; it is the carpenter or electrician who knows wood and wire and how to cut them to the proper lengths and fasten them correctly together. A blueprint presupposes this kind of intelligence, but that is exactly the kind of intelligence that, in the genome, we need to explain.

Ridley, and he is hardly alone in this, prefers a third metaphor: that of an instruction book or guidebook of some kind, a book carrying the instructions that direct each cell in the self-arrangement routine appropriate for its particular place in the organism, and that then call for the cells to fit themselves together so as to form first parts of the organism and then the whole.

"The genome is a very clever book," Ridley writes, "because in the right conditions it can both photocopy itself and read itself. The photocopying is known as replication, and the reading as translation." These are the only two functions ascribed to the book, but he thinks they are enough. By means of replication (from one DNA molecule to another), every cell can have its own book to read. By means of translation, proteins are made.

But does this take us where we need to go? Making proteins is important, but we still do not have a metaphor that captures the genome's presumed power to design and construct an entire *organism*. That power, if it is to be found anywhere, must reside in the computational role I described earlier, and that is played by the proteins that are expressed by the homeotic genes.

IT IS a remarkable thing that the genome is never described as a computer, especially since the computer is a standard metaphor for the brain. Indeed, one kind of computer design—the "neural network"—bears a name that reflects the apparent affinity between brains and machines, being a parallel-processing design rather than the serial processing of the standard computer.

One trillion of the body's 100 trillion cells are involved in the human brain, and 10 percent of that number, 100 billion, are neurons of various types. Those neurons in most cases put out thousands of connections (called dendrites) that hook up to one another in the millions, forming vast interconnected networks that are very precisely wired to one another. The brain's system uses chemical and electrical signals that are weighed, balanced, and processed in very elaborate and complex, massively parallel ways. And yet, still and all, the brain is an inferior in the chain of command, for the genome is credited with making the *entire* organism, including, as one of its parts, the brain.

So, does the genome itself resemble a computer? Not in the least. It is not just that computers do not make anything. After all, sometimes they do: a powerful computer hooked up to an assembly line might very well make an automobile, a washing machine, or (when the day comes) a household robot; and it might replicate itself to boot. At some ultimate echelon of mechanical achievement, where intelligence itself is fully computerized, we might even have a system that begins to approximate the economy within an organism's genome. No, the real reason the genome does not resemble a computer is that, so far as we understand it, anything having to do with cognition, or simulating cognition, is foreign to the genome and what it does.

Consider a few facts about the marvelous homeotic gene. In an embryo, a very small portion of the protein produced by this gene (according to the usual formula, only 60 amino acids in length) insinuates itself into one of the chromosomes in a small set of cells at some definite regional location at an appropriate time and stage of development; there it switches on a small group of genes, usually between eight and thirteen. But in so doing it is

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(metaphorically) quite mindless—a very minor trigger, like a stick one might use to prod a herd of cows toward the barn.

What triggers the triggerer? Nobody knows. More than that, nobody has any theoretical proposal to suggest. It is the farmer who picks up the stick, and it is the cows that know their way to the milking barn. Nothing in the homeotic story simulates the farmer's or the cows' intelligence. "Triggering" is an interesting biological event; it goes nowhere toward explaining construction. What kicks the homeotic gene into action? No answer exists, factual or theoretical.

And why does a leg or a forebrain form under the prodding of the homeotic gene? This is a somewhat different question from the question that I have just said has no answer. It is like the question, why do the cows come home? The homeotic gene triggers other genes, and genes make proteins. How do the proteins that are expressed by those subordinate genes find their way into a highly structured organization like a leg or an eye? Once again the answer is, no one knows. Not only does no one know, no one has the slightest idea how to look for an answer.

The flamboyant images Ridley uses, based on cognitive metaphors like reading, understanding, knowledge, intention, and so forth, are utterly irreducible to biological mechanics, and there is also no analogy in mechanical or computer technology to help us. The homeotic recital is somewhat like a tale of components for a Boeing 747 coming together to form a landing gear or tail assembly when the shipping crates in which their parts have arrived at the plant are opened by a crowbar. In a way, the crowbar is essential to the landing gear, and, in a way, the crowbar also controls the downstream pathway of the nuts, bolts, struts, wheels, tires, and so forth: for unless the crates are opened, the parts cannot be assembled. But in the genome, the parts themselves know where they belong. Moreover, they go where they belong by themselves, without any help from the crowbar, or anyone wielding it.

V

AT LAST we are able to observe something very clearly: it is not ignorance that befuddles us, but what we know. We know, to repeat, that the mammalian genome contains only about 100,000 genes. And we know—we can see all around us—that what the genome must do is immense. From this knowledge we have constructed explanations that do not explain.

By way of working toward a conclusion, let me introduce a final consideration that is again based on the work of Walter Elsasser. Within a wide range of variation, there seems to be no definable concept of anatomical or metabolic normalcy. The size of a stomach varies greatly from one individual to another, irrespective of the size of the person; similarly, the location of the stomach can be anywhere from about one to about nine inches below the sternum. Biochemical variations among persons are, as Elsasser points out, even greater. In the "normal" range of blood chemistry, the ratios of upper to lower limits can be two, six, or even nine; and there are always some people whose chemistry falls well outside the normal without any deleterious effect, and much farther outside without fatal consequences. Bone density, which most people tend to think is fairly uniform, has been shown to vary by almost sixfold among young males. Since the body's chemistry and its organs are functionally interdependent (though to what degree we do not know, and cannot measure) the possible viable combinations are, as before, "extravagantly large."

This flexibility of design is, of course, what enables life and evolution to proceed. One interesting, even exhilarating, possibility arising from it is that individuality itself may be a feature of living systems, and that this individuality becomes most striking when we look at details rather than at crude summations. If the genome is the sole cause of organic development and maintenance, then in *each* case, rather than in the general case, it not only makes the component parts but adapts the entire system to itself. This takes us back to the point about solipsism I raised earlier; but what it suggests is not that (as Ridley would have it) the genome works always in the identical style but rather that it operates in an environment of such freedom that, at every point, its alternative viable courses are virtually infinite.

Two sets of conclusions follow from this, the one intellectual and the other practical.

Obviously, incontestably, the fertilization of a single egg by a single sperm cell is materially sufficient to make an organism. As has been proved by the successful cloning of goats and cows from differentiated cells, the "information" to make an organism remains within every collection of chromosomes. The genome does it; it makes the organism. But we do not know how it makes the organism, and what we *do* know, as we presently know it, offers us no theory, no model, of how an explanation might be framed to tell us how the thing is done. We can sequence the genome until those cows come home,

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but that will not instruct us how it works. The genome does too much for the capacity we presently perceive it has, and it does not do what it does in any way that we can faintly understand.

Will we ever understand it? At the risk of sounding reckless, or mystical, I would say: perhaps not. But at the very least it should be clear that until some profound new idea, some tremendous leap in human understanding, comes upon us, well beyond anything we now comprehend, the genome will indeed remain a mystery. In my own judgment, this new explanatory idea, if and when it arrives, is likely to take us very far from anything that is intuitively comfortable, farther than relativity theory or quantum mechanics ever took us in physics. Explanation awaits a genius, and probably a long developmental period thereafter; it will not come into the world full-blown.

But if, in the end, we come back to the genome after all, though by a means as yet undreamt of, will we not be returning to what we are being told by our experts that we already know for a certainty? No, we will not—any more than, after relativity theory, we came back to the same three dimensions. It is not a matter of a detail here or there that remains to be cleared up, or of a small and rapidly receding area of ignorance. Rather, everything truly essential about the process is utterly and even radically incomprehensible. Until the moment of illumination arrives, we should, in the name of scientific and intellectual honesty, acknowledge as much.

BUT THERE is an urgent practical and indeed moral consideration here as well.* Gene therapy, for example, is premised on the idea that we are in fact confident about which genes do what, and (crucially) how, and that by locating and replacing a faulty or missing gene in an organism we can thereby effect a cure. This, after all, is what has happened recently in France, where working genes were added to cells in bone marrow to save the lives of infants who might otherwise have died of a particular immune disorder. Human genetic engineering, for its part, goes still further than this, manipulating genes in the germline itself—that is, at or before the sperm-and-egg stage—and hence affecting not just a single living organism but its heirs unto all eternity.

The promise held out by these enterprises is nothing short of breathtaking. But they are, to put it gently, inherently dangerous, and not just because they can mislead ill people into entertaining false hopes—although they can certainly do that. As has been pointed out in the more thoughtful news stories about the recent French breakthrough, the therapy in this one case is itself highly limited in nature, as is the disease being treated, and its implications for other diseases and other therapies are quite uncertain. More important, this achievement comes after a decade of gene-therapy research characterized by the most grandiose and sweeping promises of imminent cures for everything from cystic fibrosis to Alzheimer's to all forms of cancer. In practice, there has been one crushing failure after another, including, last year, the death of a teenage boy in a clinical trial at the University of Pennsylvania.

"There were a lot of people going around grandstanding" in the past decade, one honest medical researcher has acknowledged in the *New York Times*, citing the large numbers of trials that have been approved "without extraordinary oversight in terms of scientific or clinical benefit." This "awful history," he went on, indicts not just the companies that have stood to benefit commercially from successful trials, and therefore have an interest in hyping the potential of gene therapy. "Some of it, unfortunately," is the fault of "the investigators and the academic institutions."

This is very bad, and it sheds a rather lurid light on academic and scientific pretensions to probity and cautiousness. But there is real cause of alarm when one considers just what all the "grandstanding" has been about. Genes are not machines, and we ourselves do not work like computers. Unless and until we know how collections of genes go together, how they combine to form organisms, whether plants or animals or human beings, we will not know what, really, we are doing when we add a gene to an existing organism, or manipulate the genes in a germline in such a way as to affect future generations. If the process of forming an organism possesses, as I have argued, an element of freedom, and is fraught with an infinite number of choices along the path, each of them setting in train numerous complex and far from predetermined actions and reactions, it is terrible to contemplate the responsibility that lies upon us when, profoundly ignorant as we remain, we make bold to add to, subtract from, or alter the pages in the book of life.

* For an extended discussion, see also "The Moral Meaning of Genetic Technology" by Leon R. Kass in the September 1999 COMMENTARY—ED.

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What Victor Klemperer Saw

Daniel Johnson

THE NAME of Klemperer has long been synonymous with music. One of the greatest conductors of all time, Otto Klemperer was among those titanic figures of the Jewish diaspora of the 1930's who fructified the Anglo-American cultural landscape. His exile was our good fortune.

In many ways, Klemperer embodied the tragedy of the German-Jewish symbiosis. In his role as director of the Kroll Opera, he had premiered major works by such composers as Stravinsky, Janácek, and Hindemith; by pioneering new styles of performance, he had also become an object of hate for reactionaries, called by the Nazis "*Obermusikjude*": "chief music Jew." Yet, in 1946, Klemperer was the first great émigré to return to Germany after the war, a model of magnanimity, seeking, as he said then, "to heal the wounds made by this terrible time."

This imposing giant of a man was prey to depression, and at one point had placed himself in the care of his cousin, Georg Klemperer. Georg had run a large Berlin hospital and, as one of Germany's most eminent physicians, had traveled to the Soviet Union to minister to the dying Lenin. Georg, who would become an émigré himself, had a younger brother, Victor, who remained behind in Germany to pursue a promising academic career as a professor of Romance languages in Dresden. Otto had become acquainted with his cousin Victor when they were both students in Berlin, but thereafter lost touch. As he moved from success to success, the conductor neither was aware of nor, as far as is known, cared about the increasingly desperate plight of a comparatively obscure relation left behind in Germany.

Today, however, when Germans discuss the name Klemperer, they are more likely to be referring to Victor than to Otto, for Victor, who died in 1960 in East Germany at the age of seventy-eight, has now belatedly emerged from the shadow of his cousin to eclipse his fame. From the moment they began to be published five years ago, Victor Klemperer's diaries, which after his death had been preserved for decades by his second wife, became unprecedented best-sellers in Germany. The first two volumes, covering the years 1933 to 1945, went through six editions in a year, transforming the fortunes of their (formerly Communist) publisher, the ailing Aufbau Verlag. Five more volumes are also available in German, covering the period both before 1933 and after 1945. In the meantime, the first two volumes, which even abridged run in German to some 1,700 pages, have come out still further abridged in English under the title *I Will Bear Witness*.*

Without question, these diaries constitute one of

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* Random House. Vol. 1, 1933-1941, 519 pp., $29.95; vol. 2, 1942-1945, 556 pp., $29.95.

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the great works of the age, by far the most readable—and most revealing—first-hand testimony to have emerged from the Nazi era. But Klemperer's posthumous renown also has something to do with our own historical moment, and in particular with the German nation's continuing reassessment of its past. In the face of the indictment leveled four years ago by Daniel Jonah Goldhagen in *Hitler's Willing Executioners**—also, ironically, a best-seller in Germany—Victor Klemperer's diary has been pressed into service as a witness for the defense: the defense, that is, of "ordinary Germans." For if Klemperer's tribulations, recorded in minute detail, make unmistakably clear just how badly most ordinary Germans of the 30's and 40's did in fact treat their Jewish neighbors, ordinary Germans of the 90's have also taken heart from his discriminating acknowledgments of those who showed compassion.

WHO WAS Victor Klemperer? The son of a Reform rabbi, he was born in 1881 into the assimilated Jewish intelligentsia of Bismarck's new Reich. From his youth, his only wish was to be German, to identify with and contribute to the self-confident *Kulturvolk* among whom he lived. Jewishness, not to mention Judaism, was irrelevant to this goal. In *Curriculum Vitae*, reminiscences of his early youth that he began in late 1938 after the *Kristallnacht* pogrom (and that were not published until 1989), he describes his father's funeral: since his elder brothers had already converted to Lutheranism, the presiding rabbi turned to him to recite the Kaddish. Klemperer recalls his blunt refusal, his acute sense of embarrassment, his eagerness to have done with everything his father had stood for. And, indeed, it was not long afterward that he, too, was baptized. Only many years later, when the Nazis sought to segregate Jews from German culture, did Klemperer rediscover his Jewish heritage, and then not in any theological or communal sense but as a detached student of literature and history.

The young Klemperer had sought to make a career first as a writer and then as a journalist, in neither case with much success. In the years before World War I, having married the highly musical and non-Jewish Eva Schlemmer, he decided to start again, and threw himself into academic studies under the guidance of the leading Romance scholar Karl Vossler. Like many patriotic German Jews, Klemperer, already then in his thirties, volunteered for and fought in the Great War. But despite his record of service, and despite the several excellent books on French literature he would publish in the ensuing decades, he never rose higher than a chair at the Technical Academy in Dresden, a second-class post for a first-class mind.

He resented his professional marginalization deeply, rightly suspecting that anti-Semitism was partly to blame for his failure to advance. Yet his belief in the superiority of German culture remained undiminished; he envied rival scholars like Erich Auerbach, who with Vossler's help had escaped persecution by finding a niche in Istanbul. Until 1933, and even for some time afterward, Klemperer still identified unconditionally with the German nation, and had nothing but contempt for Jews who disowned Germany, going so far in his diary (in a 1934 entry) to compare Zionists, with "their nosing after blood, their ancient 'cultural roots,'" to Nazis.

After Hitler came to power, however, Klemperer realized that it was only a matter of time before he would lose his job. As a veteran, he was exempt from the initial purge of Jewish academics, but his students were deterred from attending his lectures and seminars, and in May 1935 he was summarily dismissed. Though he despised the cowardice of more conformist colleagues, and was glad to escape the bizarre academic rituals that Nazis like the philosopher Martin Heidegger loved to improvise, the loss of his professorial status led to daily humiliations and cumulative persecution.

At first, as his diary chronicles, he suffered mainly from bureaucratic chicanery, if always with an ominous undertone that gradually became more explicit. Just before the reoccupation of the Rhineland in 1936, for example, the atmosphere in the village where he and his wife were living turned ugly: the mayor warned him he was only a "guest." But by April 1938, after the *Anschluss* with Austria, he writes in despair of "how deeply Hitler's attitudes are rooted in the German people, how good the preparations were for his Aryan doctrine, how unbelievably I have deceived myself my whole life long when I imagined myself to belong to Germany, and how completely homeless I am." After *Kristallnacht*, which took place in November of that year, the Klemperers were visited by the police, accompanied by an aggressively anti-Semitic "citizen"; they were in search of weapons, and upon the discovery of his old saber from World War I he was arrested, later to be released without charge. This was the first of several house searches that became ever more brutal as the Gestapo took control. Even formerly friendly acquaintances who were by no means Nazis, such as the local police constable,

* Reviewed in COMMENTARY by Robert S. Wistrich, "Helping Hitler," July 1996.

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now cut him dead; by now, he reckons in his diary, at least 79 out of the 80 million Germans were hostile to the Jews or indifferent to their fate.

In the early years of the regime, Klemperer took refuge in his work: despite the depression induced by the loss of status, career, civil rights, and, in the end, property, he wrote a history of French literature in the 18th century. Deprived of access to libraries, he doggedly commenced his *Curriculum Vitae*. His diary, too, is replete with countless examples of Nazi jargon that he recorded in preparation for another book, *LTI*, shorthand for *Lingua Tertii Imperii* ("The Language of the Third Reich"), published after the war; it is still by far the best such study.

Suspended between disbelief and despair, the Klemperers had refused to consider emigration until *Kristallnacht*. But they had waited too long; though Victor's brother Georg was already in America, they lacked friends in high places. Thus he resolved to "bear witness": recording the progressive degradation of Germany and of the Germans became an act of defiance, a life-saving routine, and a source of consolation. His diary saved his dignity and his sanity. It also became his magnum opus, a prodigious project: the anatomy of tyranny.

IN THE pages of this work, Klemperer notes how, as Hitler's victorious blitzkrieg gave way to the nightmare of prolonged war on the eastern front, overt anti-Semitism became still more widespread among the German populace and took ever more extreme forms. Even though scarcely any Jews remained within Germany, the Jews were blamed for every misfortune. It was, indeed, his realization of German hatred that forced him to reassess both his own identity and that of his fellow Germans. By October 1941, he was constantly asking himself: "Who among the 'Aryan' Germans is really untouched by National Socialism? The contagion rages in all of them; perhaps it is not contagion, but basic German nature."

Though he had little access to reliable information—far less so than most Germans, who could and did listen to the BBC or other Allied radio stations, usually with impunity—Klemperer was able to report in his diary the mass shooting of Jews on the eastern front in January 1942. By March of the same year, he had heard about Auschwitz. In April, a carpenter told his wife in detail about the massacres at Babi Yar outside Kiev. In an entry dated October 1942 he calls Auschwitz a "swift-working slaughterhouse," and by January of the following year he is speaking of "the constant dreadful fear of Auschwitz." In October 1944, he was told that "six to seven million Jews" had been "shot or gassed." He records cases of the Gestapo not only taunting its victims with the imminence of their extermination but informing non-Jews of what lay in store for the Jews. In such entries, Klemperer demolishes once and for all the myth that ordinary Germans did not and could not know about the Holocaust.

Were it not for his "Aryan" wife, Klemperer himself would certainly have perished along with all his Jewish acquaintances. Jews in mixed marriages were treated more leniently in Nazi Germany, though many of their Aryan spouses yielded to the pressure to divorce, and those who did not were reviled. The only successful public protest in Nazi Germany against the Final Solution was mounted in Berlin in 1943 by women in mixed marriages who maintained a vigil outside the Rosenstrasse detention center until their Jewish husbands were released. Living in Dresden, isolated in a mini-ghetto (the Jews' House), the Klemperers knew nothing of these heroic Berlin women, but Eva clearly partook of their fortitude and ignored the constant insults by her compatriots.

Hard as the early years of the Third Reich had been for the Klemperers, the war years were incomparably harder, physically and emotionally. Malnourished, maltreated, aware that the malediction pronounced upon his people would do him in unless the war ended first, Klemperer nevertheless observes himself in his diary with extraordinary detachment. In July 1941 he spent eight days in solitary confinement for infringing the blackout. Deprived of books and eyeglasses, suspenders and collar, plunged into mortal terror and nihilism, he performed manic mnemonic exercises that somehow helped him "climb back to earth from . . . hell."

Despite his age, despite myopia and angina, Klemperer was drafted into forced labor units. When his Jewish doctor tried to declare him unfit, a Nazi doctor refused to hear of it. As it turned out, the work was not especially onerous—clearing snow, followed by a stint in an herbal-tea factory—and it brought him into contact with Germans who lacked the instinctive anti-Semitism he had encountered everywhere else. But his frank acknowledgement of this fact hardly led him (as some commentators have supposed) to abandon his earlier convictions about "the unfathomable hatred of Jewry" in Germany.

Far more sophisticated than later historians, Klemperer remarks time and again on the insidious

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way that even decent Germans were implicated by Nazi indoctrination. In August 1944, for example, during an air-raid drill, the warden, "a decent man," at first indignantly denied that Jews would be left to burn if their cellar collapsed, but then admitted: "I should very much like to help you, but as you know, my hands are tied." Klemperer's acid comment:

> It is tragicomic . . . when the man attempts to make us fit into the general "effort," when he inevitably slips into the stock of phrases he has learned by heart, which are like an insult to us: three times yesterday we were told that we had to play our part, both for our own and the general good, ready for action as a "community bound by oath." Pretty to hear, when one wears the [yellow] star and is an "enemy of the state."

This brings us to the most dramatic scene in the diaries. Klemperer survived and witnessed the Allied destruction of Dresden on February 13-14, 1945. To this day, that raid is generally regarded by Germans as an Anglo-American atrocity; yet Klemperer, a Jewish civilian, foresaw its military inevitability already in October 1944, when, with the defection of Hungary from the Axis, it became clear that Dresden would form "the transport junction behind the front which is most threatened. . . . Then we shall get heavy air attacks."

The Dresden bombing almost certainly saved Klemperer's life. Carrying out a compulsory labor assignment, he had delivered summonses for deportation to most of the remaining Jews of the city, many of them seriously ill or mothers with small children. Then the Allied bombers arrived. His description, written a few days later, vividly evokes the firestorm, in the course of which Eva disappeared and he was slightly wounded in the face. He dashed through the conflagration, clutching the bag containing his precious diary, his head swathed in a blanket. Reaching a terrace by the river Elbe, he watched as the "little rococo jewel-box" of Dresden was incinerated along with at least 30,000 people. As dawn broke on February 14, Eva found him and ripped the hateful yellow star from his coat.

In the ensuing chaos, with records destroyed and the Gestapo distracted, the Klemperers left Dresden and traveled incognito across Germany, evading the flailing tentacles of the dying Reich. In Munich, where they arrived in April, they found Victor's old teacher and patron, the anti-Nazi professor Vossler, who had been "altogether isolated" but not persecuted. Vossler serves as a reminder of how very different were the fortunes of anti-Nazis who did not happen to be Jews. The professor had retained his apartment, his library, and his maid, who served the Klemperers a "princely peacetime lunch."

By the time the GI's came on the scene, Klemperer notes sardonically, "the Third Reich is already as good as forgotten, everyone was opposed to it, 'always' opposed to it." Not until a week after the end of the war did he dare reveal his Jewish identity to a German official in a village where the Klemperers were staying. Her response: "Immediately smiling courtesy, helpfulness, expression of respect. One 'Herr Professor' after the other." When he asked her not to tell the villagers, whom he still did not trust, she replied vehemently: "Well, do you think you still have anything to fear? On the contrary: you will get preferential treatment!" Thus does Klemperer's chronicle of the Third Reich, which begins in agony, end in excruciating irony.

When they first began to appear, the Klemperer diaries were compared favorably (by *Time* and other publications) with the diary of Anne Frank. Such comparisons are unfair: a late-middle-aged professor and an adolescent girl are bound to have incommensurable views of the world. It is Anne Frank's childish naiveté that lends her journal its unforgettable charm, and her fate that renders it unbearably poignant; by contrast, the relatively happy end of Klemperer's war is less obviously tragic.

Anne Frank will always remain the best starting point for understanding the Holocaust, because her voice speaks directly to children across the decades. The historical value of the Klemperer diaries is, however, incomparably greater. Its wealth of detail, its sensitivity to linguistic and social nuance, its political insight and awareness, its humane intelligence—these qualities leave all other such efforts in the shade. Like Samuel Pepys in his time, like the Duc de Saint Simon or James Boswell in theirs, Klemperer evokes the atmosphere of Nazi Germany so well that the stench fills one's nostrils. And all the while, the horror of his story is illuminated by shafts of dry, bitter wit.

The true uniqueness of Klemperer emerges when one compares his diary with those of his non-Jewish German contemporaries. Take, for example, the journals of Joseph Goebbels, which have been appearing in a scholarly edition since the late 1980's and which offer a supreme instance of that much overused expression: the banality of evil. Despite Goebbels's reputation as the leading Nazi intellec-

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tual, despite his much-vaunted Ph.D., what strikes one immediately about his diaries is the absence in them of any interior life. Where Klemperer's diary is a never-ending dialogue with himself, Goebbels's is a monologue of hatred, reminiscent of and no doubt influenced by *Mein Kampf*. Where Klemperer acknowledges his own resentments—including of his famous cousin Otto—Goebbels displays no self-knowledge at all. Klemperer is fascinated by the Nazi mentality, and uses his skills as a linguist to analyze it; Goebbels is wholly uninterested in the Jews or the others on whom he preyed. Although Goebbels's status as Hitler's closest confidant renders his voluminous record of Nazi politics a valuable source for historians, it was conceived primarily as a propaganda weapon, aiming to deceive not only contemporary public opinion but also posterity and perhaps even its author.

The diaries of the novelist-essayist Ernst Jünger (1895-1998) provide a different kind of contrast to Klemperer, revealing how even those Germans who did not consider themselves Nazis were, for the most part, indifferent to the persecution of the Jews. As a hero of World War I, a literary celebrity, and a foe of the Weimar Republic, Jünger had for a time been close to the Nazis, even contributing to the party newspaper and sending copies of his books to Hitler. By the time the Nazis came to power, however, he had come to regard them as murderous demagogues and satirized them in his 1939 novel *On the Marble Cliffs*, which thereafter put him out of favor with the regime.

Still, the Wehrmacht authorities in occupied Paris, where Jünger was stationed for much of World War II, permitted him to publish the first volume of his diaries. When he republished it after 1945, together with the ensuing volumes, he carefully suppressed those passages that did not fit his postwar image as a free spirit and someone close to the German resistance.

Jünger's diaries are far more self-consciously literary than Klemperer's. As a distinguished amateur entomologist, Jünger had no less an eye for detail, albeit of a clinical kind, but where Klemperer's responses to what he sees are spontaneous and ethical, Jünger's are studiedly aesthetic. Indeed, Jünger— as a good Nietzschean—deliberately excludes any hint of Judeo-Christian compassion from his reflections on the human catastrophe that he observed from the side of the aggressor. Similarly absent is any sense of responsibility arising from that aggression. The diarist looks down on the maelstrom of events as if from a higher sphere, one in which anti-Semitism is construed as a vulgar vice (to which, incidentally, in his own earlier journalism, Jünger himself had hardly been immune) rather than a genocidal ideology.

Klemperer, for whom the Nietzschean idea of "living dangerously" was not the whim of an intellectual spectator but an inescapable fact of life as a Jew in the Third Reich, is more clear-sighted about the Nazis than Jünger or the countless literati who thought like him. In April 1933, during the first weeks of the Nazi "seizure of power," he saw that anti-Semitism was not mere demagogy, not a means to an end, but, however incomprehensibly, it was the end itself: "The fate of the Hitler movement will undoubtedly be decided by the Jewish business. I do not understand why they have made this point of their program so central. It will sink them. But we will probably go down with them."

Nowhere in Jünger's diaries is the truth stated so plainly, even though it is clear that Jünger knew a good deal about the Final Solution, at the latest after his visit to the Russian front in 1942-43. But he is more concerned with the "Old Testament" vengeance to be visited upon the Germans for their deeds than with the deeds themselves. He mourns his fallen son Ernstel; he has sympathy for his compatriots in defeat; but toward the Jews, he is pitiless.

Another outstanding diarist, Jochen Klepper, was the "Aryan" partner in a mixed marriage and thus in a comparable situation to the Klemperers. A devout Lutheran and a thoroughly decent man, Klepper showed the ultimate solidarity with his Jewish wife, Hanni. Though he could save her from deportation to the death camps, he could not, despite his acquaintance with the Nazi interior minister, save his stepdaughter, Reni. All three committed suicide in November 1942.

In his diary, Klepper's constant refrain is that the German people do not support Hitler's anti-Semitism. After the *Kristallnacht* pogrom in 1938, he even suggests that the Nazi measures are alienating the population. He contemplates the impending annihilation passively: the churches are impotent, so are the veterans. Even as he chose death rather than abandon his loved ones, Klepper was in denial about his beloved fatherland.

THIS WAS not Klemperer's attitude; indeed, he saw clearly that such passivity was at the root of the German problem. In January 1947, two years after the end of the war, he wrote to a former pupil, Hans Hirche, who had appealed to him for help. Hirche had been a major in the Wehrmacht and was now having difficulty finding a civilian job. Klemperer is blunt: Hirche's word of honor that he was innocent of atrocities, even if accepted, does not exon-

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erate him of guilt: "You and all the others must have known what crazy criminals you were serving, what unthinkable cruelties you stood up for and made possible by your loyalty." To the claim, "we didn't know," Klemperer rejoins: "Hadn't one of you read Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, where all that was later carried out had been planned in advance with shameless openness? And were all these murders, all these crimes, wherever one looked, only evident to us—I do not only mean the Jews, but all the persecuted?"

If Klemperer is inclined to be lenient, it is toward ordinary soldiers. But toward officers, and toward the intelligentsia—anyone who could have and should have known better—he is implacable. To Hirche's argument that he had hoped to moderate the regime from within, Klemperer replies:

> It must have been obvious long before 20 July [1944, the date of Colonel Claus von Stauffenberg's attempt on Hitler's life] that there was nothing left to moderate—and after 20 July the madness continued for nearly a whole year. No, if I look at these things objectively, I cannot find anybody free of guilt.

STRIPPED OF some of its cruder and ahistorical claims, Daniel Goldhagen's thesis—that most ordinary Germans shared the Nazis' "eliminationist" anti-Semitism and were ready to participate in genocide without coercion—is, therefore, quite compatible with Klemperer's view that Nazi ideology had so saturated German culture that (as he noted only six weeks before the surrender) "with this people, this desperado regime really will resist down to the last village." It is true that he mentions occasional acts of generosity to Jews by individual Germans, but these acts were rare and seldom involved serious risk. They were far outweighed by the instances of petty cruelty, especially from those in any position of authority.

From sources other than Klemperer, we also know that many of those involved in the Nazi extermination program may have felt revulsion at what they did. Many SS men suffered from stress, and Adolf Eichmann himself, in the prison memoirs recently released by Israel, claims to have watched the shooting of Jews with disgust, and even to have tried in vain to save a child who resembled one of his own; on the way back to Berlin, Eichmann writes, he drank heavily. In fact, it is precisely this mixture of saccharine sentimentality and zealous obedience that was typical of the Third Reich, and not just of the Nazis who ran it.

That is certainly what Klemperer believed, right to the bitter end. Even without his yellow star and with the regime collapsing, he lived in constant fear of recognition by "ordinary Germans," however much they might now curse the Nazis. When queried by someone whether he was "of Jewish descent or mixed race," he did not give himself away but notes afterward: "I am just as close to death as on the night of the bombs." Klemperer bears witness, alas, not to the decency of most ordinary Germans, but to their moral cowardice.

That this moral cowardice has not altogether disappeared from mainstream German opinion today is, finally, the lesson implicit in the reception of the Klemperer diaries. In effect, Klemperer has been made to say what most Germans want him to say: namely, that, during the war years, they, just like every other nation, were a "normal" mixture of good and evil. This interpretation is even shared by some older historians in the United States. Thus, Fritz Stern has recommended Klemperer as a balance to Goldhagen, and especially as one whose more "nuanced picture" includes the Germans' "moments of decency and quiet help." Similarly, István Deák, writing in the *New Republic*, asserts that the diaries show how "in Dresden . . . 'ordinary' Germans tended to behave decently toward the frail, bent, old professor. . . . Unlike the minority of radical anti-Semites, the majority of Europeans did not want all the Jews to disappear from their midst; they wanted only that there should be fewer Jews."

Leave aside the elision here of the distinction between Germans and Europeans, which transforms a dubious thesis into a tenable one; leave aside, too, that German Jews had never made up more than 1 percent of the population, a figure reduced by 1944 to about one in 10,000 (how many fewer would be few enough?). Since a major part of the raison d'être of the Klemperer diaries is to document the perversion of the German language and culture, let us dwell instead on that word "decency" (*Anstand*). It was, in fact, a favorite word of the Nazis—Klemperer himself describes two SS men as "inoffensively decent"—and for many Germans it served effectively as yet another means of denying reality. Decent Germans refused to recognize the indecency of the Nazi regime until it was too late, and they then proved themselves too decent to do anything about it. Would it have been decent to kill the Führer? Most Germans, even after the war, did not think so, to judge by their hostility or indifference to those who actually came close to assassinating Hitler: the dashing Claus von Stauffenberg and the unsung "little man," Johann Georg Elser.

Today, decency in Germany takes other forms. It

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is true that younger Germans are readier to discuss the Nazi past than were their parents or grandparents. It is also true that no German politician could get away with apologetic remarks about the past like those made by Jörg Haider in Austria. Much more typical of the German mindset is the unwillingness, or refusal, to take cognizance of certain uncongenial interpretations of the past. Thus, in 1998, the novelist Martin Walser, while careful not to blame the Jews directly, asserted that "the Holocaust industry" had persecuted Germans, and that the Holocaust itself had been "instrumentalized" for sinister purposes.

Walser's remarks dovetailed with the turn-of-the-millennium wish of the left-wing government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder to banish unwelcome and inconvenient memories. Of Goldhagen's book, Schröder had this to say: "I haven't read it; but I don't believe it makes sense to claim that all Germany not only knew of the murder of the Jews, but also wanted it." In Schröder's case—his father was killed on the Russian front—filial piety may explain this reluctance to confront the guilt of ordinary Germans. But what a German politician, especially a left-wing one, also knows is that saying he has not read Goldhagen is something public opinion will largely approve of.

A closer reading of the Klemperer diaries would cure the chancellor—and not only the chancellor—of any illusions about what wartime Germans knew or wanted concerning the Jews. But no such closer reading is likely to take place, and for reasons the diaries themselves make clear. Truly to immerse oneself in this modern classic is to find oneself wondering, and not for the first time, whether the mentality of national self-deception and willful ignorance that it so brilliantly depicts will ever, like the ideology of National Socialism, fade into history.

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Cops, Crime, and the "New York Times"

Arch Puddington

NOT TERRIBLY long ago, a staple feature of American journalism was the article about urban neighborhoods under siege. Especially as the crime wave took off in the 1970's and 80's, newspapers began to publish regular reports of inner-city residents living in terror of violent youth gangs, of black or Hispanic neighborhoods devastated by drugs, of racially mixed areas facing white flight because of escalating disorder and open trafficking in heroin or crack cocaine. In recent years, however, the "neighborhood under siege" article has all but disappeared, and for a simple reason: across the country, in city after city, crime rates have plunged, permitting economic revival and the return of normal civic life.

It was of more than passing interest, then, that the *New York Times* should have recently published yet another lengthy report about an urban neighborhood that is, if not exactly under assault, then at least in a state of serious turmoil. But the neighborhood in question, according to the *Times*, is besieged not by drug dealers or youth gangs—though it has its quotient of these—but by a different type of scourge entirely: namely, the police department of the City of New York (NYPD).

Entitled "Antidrug Tactics Exact a Price on Neighborhood, Many Say," the April 1 article, featured prominently on the front page of the *Times*, describes the reaction in a residential area of the Flatbush section of Brooklyn to Operation Condor, an undercover police operation aimed at driving drug dealers off the streets. The "major sentiment on this two-block stretch of Rugby Road," as gleaned from the "two dozen people" interviewed for the article, is reportedly that

> the New York Police Department has in some fundamental way misunderstood what they expect from law enforcement. They describe a police precinct that mindlessly imposes the mores of Mayberry [the sleepy southern town depicted in the 1960's Andy Griffith television series] on what is a classic rough-and-tumble Brooklyn neighborhood—working-class, Democratic, ethnically dazzling, full of swaggering striving characters who are not greatly shocked by a little human vice.
>
> They describe officers swooping into the neighborhood like urban warriors, watching residents from rooftops, circling in unmarked cars and surveillance vans, seemingly oblivious to the rhythms of the neighborhood: who just moved in, who is home from college, who has a bad temper. Residents say the police never seem to know. Yet at the same time, sometimes comically, every scarf is a gang color, every neighborhood scuffle a prelude to gang war-

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fare, every neighborhood nickname a menacing gang moniker.

In short, a police operation run amok.

THIS IS, to be sure, hardly the first time the *New York Times* has raised doubts about the wisdom of the aggressive tactics employed by the NYPD under Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. In particular, and along with other New York media, the paper began putting the police under intense scrutiny after the 1997 torture of Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant, in a Brooklyn precinct house, an incident of police violence that was followed by another in February 1999 when Amadou Diallo, an illegal immigrant from Africa, was mistakenly killed by four officers in the vestibule of his Bronx apartment building. Since then, the *Times* has emerged as one of the NYPD's, and by extension, the mayor's, most relentless critics.

In news article after news article, the paper has highlighted what it sees as the pitfalls of the city's assertive policing strategy. It has pointed to overzealousness in the enforcement of "quality-of-life" offenses, and raised questions about the tactics of the NYPD's famed street-crime unit. Its editorial page has followed suit, expressing doubts about antidrug efforts like Operation Condor and calling for greater "diversity" in the ranks of the police force, an end to anything resembling "racial profiling," and more vigorous investigations of police brutality and misconduct.

Still, the April 1 article on Flatbush stood out, and precisely because of the neighborhood involved. For this is not a desperately poor, crime-ridden community but a middle-class, integrated one. If minority grievances with the police are an old story, now the *Times* appears to be suggesting that frustrations with the Giuliani administration's law-enforcement policies are shared by New Yorkers of all races, nationalities, and income levels. And if this report is accurate, then a significant shift has indeed occurred in public attitudes, with the clear implication being that residents of New York, now enjoying safe streets and quiet neighborhoods, no longer want the police to employ the aggressive tactics that were so urgently needed a decade ago.

But is the report accurate? Eager to find out, I did a little digging on my own.

THE LOCALE that is the subject of the article, described by its author, David Barstow, as the "neighborhood" around Rugby Road, is actually only a single atypical block-and-a-half-long stretch of somewhat dilapidated apartment buildings that sits amid a larger neighborhood of well-maintained, one- and two-family Victorian homes. Though the larger neighborhood is in fact middle-class, and quite "dazzling" in its diversity—children at the nearest public school come from families speaking no fewer than 28 languages—the strip Barstow chose to focus on is highly atypical: poorer, and largely black and Hispanic. The "swaggering, striving characters" he encountered there are, moreover, quite unrepresentative of the mixture of professionals, small businessmen, and recent immigrants, many of them from Pakistan, Haiti, and the former Soviet Union, who live in the area.

On that single troubled stretch, the police, as Barstow reports, have indeed made an "unusually large number of heroin arrests" over the last year. Some of the swaggering characters who complained to him about overly aggressive policing turn out to be active criminals themselves, though Barstow does his best to call this fact into doubt. One of them, wanted by the police as a dangerous gang leader called Nightwing, is transformed in Barstow's account into a "gregarious" young black man by the name of Michael McDonald who is particularly fond of children. In introducing him, Barstow describes a scene in which a white woman and her two-year-old son pass McDonald on the street and the boy, exchanging a smile, playfully squeezes the tire of McDonald's bicycle.

Another of Barstow's subjects is José Sierra, who lives in the building where much of the neighborhood's drug trade is concentrated. Though Sierra has been arrested recently for possession of heroin—police found twelve bags in his apartment—and is under suspicion for having sold the drug in glassine packets from the lobby of his building, he, too, appears in the *Times* story less as the "career criminal" the police make him out to be and more the solid family man. True, he acknowledges having "struggled with drug use"; but he denies being a dealer. The police, he says, planted drugs in the apartment that he shares with his wife and three children, and he desires readers of the *Times* to know that he is fed up with their harassment. "I don't want my kids raised in this chaos," he says.

To supplement this entertaining and benign tableau, Barstow also interviewed a number of black and Hispanic teenagers on the same troubled block, as well as two white residents of an adjacent street. The teenagers "howl in laughter as they recite, in perfect unison, the phrase they hear all too often from police officers—'You fit the description'"—

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and tell of being "ticketed for spitting, for riding bicycles on the sidewalk." One of the two whites says she is troubled by the harassment to which the sons of her black neighbors may be subjected: "I'm glad I'm not a 20-year-old African-American." The other white woman, who moved to the area only a few months earlier, pronounces it perfectly safe; the problem, according to her, lies with the city's mayor: "Giuliani, he's out of control."

TRULY, BARSTOW chose well. For had he not opted to focus overwhelmingly on the individuals he did, and painted them in the colors he selected, he would have had to render a very different picture of the area around Rugby Road. And had he troubled himself to look into the history of the neighborhood over the past decade or so, his picture would have been more different still. But it would surely not have made the front page of the *New York Times*.

For a professional journalist, Barstow's lack of curiosity is striking. Although he reports, for example, that building owners on Rugby Road have, ominously, given the police permission to "roam the properties and arrest anyone who does not live there for trespassing," he appears not to have interviewed a single landlord who might explain why such police access was thought necessary. And while his readers are told of the police's *claim* that "business owners and residents were fed up with the heroin dealing," actual business owners or residents who might lend credence to this claim are similarly absent from his story. Most egregiously, easily available crime statistics that cast a fascinating light on the impact of aggressive policing on safety in the neighborhood go altogether unmentioned.

The truth, as I was able to learn easily enough, is this. A mere decade ago, the entire area surrounding Rugby Road was rapidly becoming a "neighborhood under siege." Crack-cocaine vials were regularly found in local school playgrounds, houses were routinely burglarized, and drain pipes were removed by addicts for the marketable copper they might yield. In an adjacent neighborhood, there was a serious outbreak of racial hostility when black militants established a gauntlet in front of a Korean-owned convenience store, shouting anti-Asian epithets at employees and harassing customers as they entered. The passivity of then-Mayor David Dinkins during this episode contributed to the feeling that racial relations in the area, as in the city as a whole, were spinning out of all control.

Residents began to notice a change in the conditions only after several years of the new policing policies ushered in by the Giuliani administration. One of the many key facts Barstow neglects to report is that these policies were introduced not over the heads of the "community" but with the explicit cooperation of local civic leaders, who struck an informal partnership with the nearby precinct to discuss police plans for maintaining safety in the schools, for identifying and bringing order to high-crime zones, and, most crucially, for stamping out the burgeoning drug trade. In this light, Barstow's assertion that the neighborhood is populated by rough-and-tumble types who are "not greatly shocked by a little human vice"—the vice in question being the sale and use of heroin and cocaine—tells us far more about attitudes toward drug abuse at the *New York Times* than it does about any discernible reality on the ground.

According to Barstow, "the aggressive tactics used against [José] Sierra—and others—have . . . too often increased tensions in the neighborhood, too often left them feeling as if police officers had no sense of proportion." How many residents of the neighborhood actually have the feelings ascribed to them by Barstow is impossible to determine. What cannot be disputed, however, is the actual effect on the neighborhood of the Giuliani administration's policing methods—an effect that can be ascertained not only from local residents, businessmen, and civic leaders but also by a glance at crime statistics over the past decade. The transformation revealed by these statistics, which seem to be unknown to Barstow, is nothing short of amazing.

From 1990, the first year of the Dinkins administration, to 1999, the most recent year for which figures are available, crime in the area Barstow was covering has been brought down dramatically in every category. Thus, the number of murders in this period fell from 45 to eight; robberies from 2,482 to 273; rapes from 56 to fourteen; and assaults from 878 to 134. And if those are the figures for violent offenses, for crimes against property the statistics are even more impressive: over the course of the same decade, burglaries declined from 3,369 to 394, auto theft from 3,298 to 233.

Nor are these statistics unique to Flatbush. They are reflected, in similar degree, in every part of New York, including in neighborhoods where violent crime had completely destroyed the fabric of civic and economic life. If few readers of the *Times* are aware of the full dimensions of this phenomenon, it is because the *Times* (and not the *Times* alone), while hardly disavowing the facts, has buried them in a barrage of stories about police misconduct.

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To judge by the *Times*, indeed, a reader might well conclude that with each passing year, police in New York have grown more abusive, more violent, and more racist; that police shootings of unarmed and innocent New Yorkers are a routine occurrence; and that the only thing achieved by the NYPD's aggressive stop-and-frisk tactics or by programs like Operation Condor is a worsening of relations between minorities and law-enforcement authorities. But this, too, is untrue—and dramatically so. In practically every measurable category, the police in New York emerge as more restrained and less prone to violence today than at any time since statistics of this kind were first compiled nearly 30 years ago.

In 1999, for example, the year of the Diallo shooting, there were eleven instances in which civilians were killed by police in New York, the lowest number since 1973 (the year statistical summaries were first published) and well below the figure of 41 deaths in 1990. There were 50-percent fewer shooting incidents in 1999 than in 1993, the last year of the Dinkins administration. Also at its lowest level ever was the ratio of fatal shootings per 1,000 officers—the ratio in such cities as Miami, Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and Dallas being much higher. As for complaints filed with the civilian review board—which is the other major index of police misconduct—the decline has been steady since 1994; from 1998 to 1999 alone, overall complaints dropped by 13 percent.

Rather than trigger-happy bigots, New York City's police are, for the most part, serious professionals who do an effective job fighting crime and who respect the rights of civilians. Moreover, the crime-fighting strategies they have developed have paid handsome dividends throughout the neighborhoods of New York. The real question, then, is not how to curb an overly aggressive force but whether its hard-won achievements can be sustained.

TO THAT question there is no easy or comforting answer. For some time now, the war against crime has itself been subjected to a counterassault—a counterassault not just by the *New York Times* but, more broadly, by the liberal and ethnic interest groups whose views the *Times* faithfully champions. This "war on the war on crime," as I have called it,* has intensified as this year's election season has gotten seriously under way, and it may be that it is beginning to have a tangible and baleful effect on the police department itself. Coming under ever more acute criticism, the department has curtailed some of its most innovative law-enforcement techniques—like the deployment of special units that attempt to stop guns from being carried on city streets. The result is that already this year there has been a noticeable resurgence in certain categories of crime.

One clear sign of trouble has been the epidemic of holdups and shootings of livery cab drivers. Another is that the murder rate itself has begun to edge upward. While the latest statistics for the Rugby Road area are not yet available, residents there report that crime, including muggings, assaults, and a brisk drug trade, remains a serious problem. Much of the illegal activity is centered on the blocks where the police stand accused by the *Times* of "mindlessly imposing the mores of Mayberry" on a neighborhood that allegedly neither wants nor needs an active police presence at all.

Whether the current rise in crime presages a return to truly grim days in New York remains to be seen. It goes without saying that a great deal hinges on how the police go about doing their job. There will always be a certain measure of friction between civilians and law-enforcement agents, and there will always be incidents in which the police make mistakes or, worse, commit misdeeds and crimes of their own. But if the police are discouraged, or actively hindered, in the performance of their primary task, as they were for so long during the decades when the city tottered on the edge of a real breakdown in order, then we may all be plunged once again into the anarchy from which we have only recently, and thankfully, emerged.

* See my article under that title in the May 1999 COMMENTARY.

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OBSERVATIONS

The Devil and Woody Allen

Carol Iannone

IN *Stardust Memories* (1980), the actor/director Woody Allen plays a celebrity filmmaker who is challenged in an interview to explain why he is an atheist. "To you I'm an atheist," he quips; "to God I'm the loyal opposition." Like most of Allen's one-liners, this is meant more for comic than for philosophical effect. But as a statement about his own filmmaking career, there is a grain of truth to it. He is the opposition in that he does not believe in God, but loyal in that his work does evince a concern with the difference between doing what one wants and doing the right thing, the latter being often (if, again, comically) conflated in his movies with the dictates of Judaism, or at least with the generalized Jewish determination to be "a good person."

In *Manhattan* (1979), for example, one of his better efforts, Allen created a memorable scene around just this issue. The Allen character is a TV writer named Isaac who is furious to discover that his friend Yale has been committing adultery—and with Isaac's new girl, Mary, to boot. To have the matter out, the two friends retreat to an empty science classroom at the college where Yale teaches. Yale, making excuses, protests that he's "not a saint." But Isaac lectures him:

> You're too easy on yourself. Don't you see that. . . . That's your whole problem. You rationalize everything. You're not honest with yourself. . . . You cheat a little bit on Emily, and you play around the truth a little with me, and the next thing you know you're in front of a Senate committee and you're naming names, you're informing on your friends.

To this effort at connecting small misdeeds with large ones (never mind that, to Allen, "naming names" seems the most heinous sin imaginable), Yale responds by spitting out angrily, "You think you're God." To which Isaac replies: "I gotta mod el myself after someone." Joking aside (if he is joking), Isaac then points to the skeleton of a gorilla hanging in the classroom and dilates on the importance of right behavior:

> What are future generations gonna say about us? My God, y'know, someday we're gonna be like him [the skeleton]. I mean, y'know, he was probably one of the beautiful people . . . and now look, this is what happens to us. Y'know, it's very important to have some kind of personal integrity. . . . I'll be hanging in a classroom one day, and I want to make sure that when I thin out, I'm well thought of.

Not bad, for a movie made in the "Me Decade." But as it happens, a little over a decade later this very same issue would assume an offscreen salience in Allen's own life, when a moral scandal erupted concerning him and Mia Farrow, his long-time companion. The story of their relationship was of course well known, and had been the subject of many admiring journalistic profiles: Farrow with her brood of children, three natural and three adopted, from her marriage to the conductor André Previn, plus an additional child, a Korean boy with cerebral palsy, adopted since her divorce; Allen twice divorced, veteran of multiple relationships, still childless

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well into his forties. Their union seemed to bring fulfillment for both—maturity and an instant family for him, for her a helpmate and a father-figure for her children.

Although they never married and lived apart, the two appeared to be very close, shuttling back and forth between their separate luxury apartments flanking Central Park and working together in his films, with Farrow as bedmate, muse, and leading lady. After some time, the pair managed to have a biological child, Allen became the legal father of the child Farrow had adopted on her own, and the two adopted still another child together. They became a familiar sight, especially to New Yorkers, frequently photographed pushing a stroller and trailing a clutch of children of different races and sizes, a model of generous-hearted, child-centered domesticity that had no need for a marriage license, that old "piece of paper." Farrow in particular, sometimes carrying a bit of extra weight but never looking less than pretty, seemed to have achieved that level of confidence in a longstanding relationship when a woman can relax, secure in the love of her man.

But then, like some kind of made-for-TV morality play, it broke apart, and the sordid details spilled out. Farrow was not a modern woman, having it all without a care or a license; as it emerged, she had desperately wanted to be married, to have a regular home life, permanent commitment, and secure financial support. But Allen would not agree, and she, like many other emotionally needy women, had clung to the relationship despite its shortcomings. Worse, far from being comfortably ensconced in Allen's affections, she had lost his interest almost entirely, and he had already helped himself to fresher fare.

And what fare. Something you might have heard while growing up, back before the sexual revolution, from still-young single mothers—that they would not marry again for fear of bringing a "strange man" into the house to live with their children—turned out to contain a core of wisdom. In early 1992, Farrow discovered that Allen had been having an affair with her sexually inexperienced, nineteen-year-old adopted Korean daughter, Soon-Yi, whom he had photographed nude in a lascivious pose. Moreover, it emerged, he had been behaving "inappropriately" with his and Farrow's adopted daughter, an adorable blonde toddler named Dylan.

Most alarming of all was that the man everyone knew from his intensely autobiographical and often charmingly funny films, the likeable little nebbish whom Allen usually played on screen—neurotic and sex-obsessed, to be sure, but basically decent—could do such things. Indeed, when his fans and admirers looked for some sign of shame and remorse, they were greeted instead with unflappable blandness and a comment that might have been lifted straight out of the mouth of a character in those films: "The heart wants what it wants."

What had happened to doing the right thing?

IT IS easy to make too much of Allen's films, only to find that he and they deflect analysis through pervasive irony and self-reflective humor. But it is also possible to make too little of them. At the very least, they serve as indexes to attitudes toward the moral life in one advanced segment of the culture. Exactly what they tell us about those attitudes—and about Allen's own—is a question addressed obliquely in two new biographies of the filmmaker by John Baxter* and Marion Meade.†

Both books are pleasant to read, stronger on accumulated detail (sometimes at a level more appropriate to a study of Henry James) than on overall analysis, though the Baxter biography has been assailed by critics for errors of fact. On the specific issue of Allen's betrayal of Farrow, they are inconclusive. Baxter sometimes seems almost as blasé as his subject, questioning what the fuss is all about. As for Meade, she takes a somewhat different tack, pointing out that Allen has actually had to pay for his conduct by forfeiting contact with his children and enduring the desertion of many of his fans, particularly women. Most astonishingly, if one is to believe her report, the film industry seems to adhere to some kind of line against the near-incest and quasi-pedophilia associated with his name.

Yet the simple truth is that anyone paying attention to his movies might have seen it coming. There were, for one thing, the floating references to perverse desires and acts, the oblique or overt admissions of attraction to young girls, the extraordinary amount of bedding and cross-bedding, of cheating and betrayal in love. More important, though, is the way, since *Manhattan* and *Stardust Memories*, he had continued to work out the problem of doing good in a countercultural world with few rules and no noticeable Jewish God.

The issue would be most thoroughly explored in *Crimes and Misdemeanors* (1989), a mesmerizingly dark meditation on evil that is adroitly leavened with a comic subplot. We meet its protagonist, a highly successful ophthalmologist named Judah Rosenthal, at the pinnacle of his life, a festive black-tie dinner celebrating the opening of a new hospital wing for which he has been the chief fundraiser. Judah is blessed with a beautiful and loving family, membership in a country club, and a couple of impressive if rather chilly-looking homes. He is widely traveled and highly cultivated, with a special affinity for the music of Schubert.

In a speech to his guests, Judah proclaims himself a freethinking man of science, but also recalls his

* *Woody Allen: A Biography*. Carroll & Graf., 492 pp., $27.00.

† *The Unruly Life of Woody Allen*. Scribner., 384 pp., $26.00.

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upbringing by a religiously observant father who taught him that the eyes of God are always on us. (Perhaps it is no accident, he remarks to softly appreciative laughter, that ophthalmology became his specialty.) This same sort of simple belief, so at odds with Judah's own cultivated skepticism, is also embodied in the film by his friend and patient, a rabbi named Ben who is losing his eyesight but holding fast to his faith.

The plot of the movie turns on a murder. Judah has been involved for two years with an emotionally demanding younger woman, Dolores Paley, who looks to him almost worshipfully for guidance toward a more cultivated life. Now he wishes to break off the affair, but Dolores, clinging hysterically, threatens to tell Judah's wife Miriam and also to expose him for finagling with the foundation's funds. Desperately, Judah calls on his brother Jack, a shady figure who has a wide acquaintance "from Atlantic City," and knows how someone "can be gotten rid of." Judah is horrified, but eventually—smaller misdeeds leading to larger ones—agrees. After the thing is done, Judah suffers terrible remorse, and although he manages to take the necessary steps to cover himself, he is haunted by images of his father teaching him about the eyes of God and how wicked deeds are always punished.

Not for long, however. After a time, "the crisis passes, he isn't punished, in fact he prospers," as Judah himself tells it later in the third person, and he returns to his normal life of wealth and privilege, happier than ever before. The universe is not a "just and moral one," as his father saw it, but an empty hole in which human beings can do what they will, so long as they can get away with it. This hideous lesson is in fact something the teenaged Judah and Jack first learned from their "brilliant" Aunt May at a memorable Passover seder gone awry that we witness in flashback.

Of course, Judah has committed his "black deed" precisely in order to protect a life that is dedicated to family, work, and philanthropy. Why should his more useful existence be sacrificed for that of a silly, unstable woman who is no good to anybody? Allen's answer to this question, which is reminiscent of the question Dostoevsky raises in *Crime and Punishment*, could not be more different from the Russian novelist's. At the end of the film, we hear in voiceover the words of another character, a philosopher and probable Holocaust survivor, who counsels that man must make his own meaning in an indifferent universe. As he speaks, we see Judah's friend Ben, now totally blind, lovingly dancing with his daughter at her wedding, at which we have heard a solemn recitation of Hebrew prayers. Thus does the man of faith, blind to the reality the film has shown us, dance in his own bubble of (deluded) meaning, while Judah, who has looked into the eyes of God, sees nothing beyond human will but a "black void." It was not long after this film was made that Allen began engaging in the activities that would later erupt in headlines and in his cryptic self-justification: "The heart wants what it wants."

And since? Well, there is *Deconstructing Harry* (1997), made almost ten years after *Crimes and Misdemeanors* and a logical—and fouler—extension of its painstaking foray into nihilism. In it, the badboy fiction writer Harry Block, suffering an agonizing lapse in creative energy that leads him to mull over his many personal misdeeds and betrayals, pays an imaginary, G.B. Shaw-like visit to hell; there he meets the devil, played by the amiable Billy Crystal, and the two raise a toast "to evil." Returning home, he receives (in another imaginary scene) the plaudits of the many fictional characters he has created in his career and of the critics and professors who love his work. "The author's message," one professor lectures, "is know yourself, stop kidding yourself, accept your limitations, and get on with your life." So much for even trying to do right thing.

And if *Crimes and Misdemeanors* and *Deconstructing Harry* represent Allen's repudiation of, as it were, Jerusalem—in both of them, and especially the latter, he goes out of his way to savage the religious law of Judaism and the Jews who observe it—in *Mighty Aphrodite* (1995) he takes out after Athens as well, getting his faux-Greek chorus to sing hymns to "life" in all its messy, lawless perversity. Only his two most recent movies, *Celebrity* (1998) and *Sweet and Lowdown* (1999), seem to be throwbacks, each about a man leaving a good woman for something better and finding emptiness instead: post-devil efforts, perhaps, to placate a female audience.

All in all, to revisit Woody Allen's later movies in the light of his life is not only to understand how he has gone about rationalizing his own behavior—a matter of interest, surely, to few other than himself—but to develop, if only by indirection, a renewed appreciation for the intricate and astringent moral law first formulated in the Torah. The real pity, one cannot help feeling, is that Allen has not just quietly opted out of the covenant altogether, but, like other talented nihilists of our time, seems driven to advance his own anti-Torah of darkness and confusion—and, given the amount of wholesome artistic energy this consumes, at the price of destroying his one true gift, which was the gift to make us laugh.

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MUSIC

England's Greatest Composer

Terry Teachout

EVER SINCE the premiere in 1945 of *Peter Grimes*, his first opera, Benjamin Britten (1913-1976) has been regarded as one of England's leading composers. Yet Britten's larger significance remains a subject of controversy, and his critical standing has fluctuated so dramatically as to suggest a fever chart of fashion in 20th-century classical music.

Well into the 1960's, Britten was held to be an important composer, perhaps even a great one. But as the atonal avant-garde consolidated its grip on the classical-music establishment in Europe and America, his refusal to embrace serialism led younger critics and composers to dismiss him as insufficiently progressive. Later on, the disclosure of his homosexuality—never publicly discussed prior to his death—would inspire a new generation of commentators to reinterpret and revalue his work yet again.

In all these aspects, he closely resembles his friend Aaron Copland, who played a role in American musical life very similar to the one Britten played in England. Born to conventionally bourgeois parents, both men became homosexuals and political leftists; as composers, both were initially viewed as radical modernists and eventually found themselves scorned as cautious conservatives; both were gifted, generous organizers who helped advance the careers of innumerable other composers; and both were highly serious artists who nonetheless wrote "accessible" works intended to appeal to a broad cross-section of listeners.

Again like Copland, Britten remained popular with performers and audiences throughout his time in the critical wilderness, and now the collapse of the avant-garde has led to a full-scale revival of interest in his music. Today, opera houses around the world perform *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, *The Turn of the Screw*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (all of which have been produced in New York City in recent seasons by the Metropolitan Opera and New York City Opera). Many of his choral and instrumental works have entered the standard repertoire, and the BBC is currently releasing "Britten the Performer," a series of CD's that feature him as conductor and pianist.* Long dismissed as a stodgy traditionalist, Britten is now considered by America's "new tonalists" to be a pivotal figure in mid-century music—the last major composer of the modern era to have used the language of traditional tonality to create musical masterpieces.

EDWARD BENJAMIN BRITTEN (he dropped the first name early in life) was born in Lowestoft, East Anglia, the frail fourth child of a quiet but strict dentist and a domineering mother who was determined that her younger son would become "the fourth B"—a composer as good as Bach, Beethoven, or Brahms. He began to play piano and to compose at the age of seven, and at fourteen started studying with both the pianist Harold Samuel, a noted Bach specialist, and the composer Frank Bridge, a minor modernist who was more cosmopolitan in his musical outlook than most of his English contemporaries.

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* Several of these CD's are listed in the selected discography at the end of this article.

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In 1930, Britten entered the Royal College of Music, an old-fashioned, peculiarly English institution that (in his words) sought to produce gentleman composers "inclined to suspect technical brilliance of being superficial and insincere." His middle-class background, as well as the rigorously professional technique he had already learned from Bridge, led him to bristle at the "amateurish and folksy" attitude of his professors and fellow students, and though his gifts were quickly recognized, he never felt entirely comfortable as a student.

Britten left college at the end of 1933, by which time his music was already being played on the BBC; he began scoring government-subsidized film documentaries in 1935, and met W. H. Auden while working on a film about coal mining for which the poet had written the script. Subsequently he became a member of the circle of artists led by Auden and the novelist Christopher Isherwood, supplying incidental music for such Auden-Isherwood plays as *The Ascent of F6*. Both Auden and Isherwood were homosexual and, sensing that the inexperienced Britten had similar inclinations, encouraged him to act on them. But the young composer was by most accounts equivocal about his sexual feelings, and did not "come out" until he met the tenor Peter Pears, with whom he emigrated to the U.S. in 1939.

"No composer of today has greater fluency or greater natural gifts," the composer-critic Constant Lambert had said of Britten the year before. But English music was still dominated by gentleman composers like Ralph Vaughan Williams, and Britten felt there was no place among them for a young modernist. Having met and befriended Copland at a recent music festival, he saw America as a land of greater artistic opportunities—as well as a place where he could live more freely. A committed pacifist, he also recognized that a European war was near, and so he and Pears decided to try their luck in the U.S.

The two of them met with moderate success in their adopted country, but they quickly became homesick and by 1942 had returned to England permanently, registering as conscientious objectors. Though they were understandably anxious about how they would be received by wartime audiences, the premiere of *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, the first of many song cycles Britten would write for Pears's idiosyncratic but vividly expressive tenor voice, was heralded as a major event. Thereafter, Britten frequently accompanied Pears in recital, in the process showing off his extraordinarily bold and imaginative piano playing, and he soon won fame as an equally gifted conductor, of both his own music and that of other composers.

THE PREMIERE of *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo* marked the emergence of Britten's mature musical style. His harmonic language was unambiguously tonal but also unmistakably modern in flavor; his instrumental palette was lucid and transparent, in the Franco-Russian manner; and he had an exceptionally rich melodic gift. Then and later, he favored the human voice—all but a handful of his best works involve singers—and he was acutely responsive to the rhythms and nuances of English, a language that few classical composers before him had set effectively. Uninterested in the Austro-German tradition (he especially disliked the music of Beethoven and Brahms), he typically avoided the conventional sonata-allegro form, instead allowing the texts he set to determine the shape of his compositions.

As a young composer, Britten had been criticized for being overly "clever." Perhaps on that account, he later opted for clarity and directness of expression. He reveled in writing pieces with parts for youthful or amateur musicians (it was only amateurish professionals that he detested), and his lack of interest in twelve-tone serialism was in part a manifestation of his populism:

> It has simply never attracted me as a method. . . . It is beyond me to say why, except that I cannot feel that tonality is outworn, and find many serial "rules" arbitrary. "Socially" I am seriously disturbed by its limitations. I can see it taking no part in the music-lover's music-making. Its methods make writing *gratefully* for voices or instruments an impossibility, which inhibits amateurs and young children.

Though Britten broke with Vaughan Williams in rejecting English folk song as a cornerstone of his style, he was altogether English in his reticence, and like Vaughan Williams and Edward Elgar before him, he found it difficult to convey romantic passion in his music. Such middle-period compositions as *Peter Grimes*, *A Ceremony of Carols* (1942), and the Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings (1944) are remarkably wide in their expressive range—now blithely exuberant, now gently lyrical, at times disquietingly intense—but they are almost never *ardent*.

In Britten's case, this inhibition had specific psychological roots. He was oddly boyish in manner (to the end of his life, he used English schoolboy slang and loved nursery-style foods), and starting in his twenties he would become emotionally fixated on a succession of pubescent boys; though he seems rarely to have attempted to act on these attractions, they were well known to his friends and colleagues, and also manifested themselves in the libretti and song texts he chose, many of which incorporate the theme of innocence defiled.* In three of his operas, *Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd* (after Herman Melville, 1951), and *The Turn of the Screw* (after Henry James, 1954), adults do violence to

* Britten once told a colleague that he had been raped by a master at his prep school, implying that this was the cause of his later homosexuality.

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children or very young men, while his last stage work, an operatic adaptation of Thomas Mann's *Death in Venice* (1972), deals explicitly with pederastic attraction.

Since Britten determined early on to write operas, he had to find a way of coming to terms with his inhibition—romantic love being, after all, one of the central themes of 18th- and 19th-century opera. He therefore encouraged his librettists to explore less traditional subjects and settings; only one of his operas, the 1960 version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is a conventional love story. By the same token, he frequently chose non-romantic poetry for his song cycles, and virtually all of his choral music is religious in orientation.

AT WAR'S end, Britten burst upon the international stage with *Peter Grimes*, an opera about a lonely, anguished coastal fisherman from East Anglia—significantly, the composer's own home—who is looked upon with suspicion by his fellow townsmen. Musically memorable and theatrically assured, *Grimes* was also a frankly traditional "grand opera," so much so that the American composer-critic Virgil Thomson condescendingly (and enviously) described it as a "rattling good repertory melodrama . . . calculated for easy effect."

A more perceptive account was supplied by the literary critic Edmund Wilson, who saw one of the earliest performances of *Grimes* and later reported on it in the *New Yorker*:

> There have been relatively few composers of the first rank who had a natural gift for the theater: Mozart, Mussorgsky, Verdi, Wagner, the Bizet of *Carmen*. To be confronted, without preparation, with an unmistakable new talent of this kind is an astonishing, even an electrifying, experience. . . . The opera seizes you, possesses you, keeps you riveted to your seat during the action and keyed up during the intermissions, and drops you, purged and exhausted, at the end.

Britten's theatrical flair was every bit as unexpected as Wilson claimed. No English composer since Henry Purcell (who died in 1695) had written a successful opera, and, since Puccini and Strauss, no composer of any nationality had written an opera sufficiently stageworthy to be added to the standard repertoire. The worldwide success of *Peter Grimes* made it feasible for Britten to devote most of his time and energy to opera; unsatisfied with England's few fully professional companies, he soon launched his own English Opera Group, for which he wrote small-scale "chamber operas," most notably *The Turn of the Screw*.

In 1948, Britten and Pears started a summer music festival in the East Anglian town where they lived, and the rapidly expanding Aldeburgh Festival soon became the center of their joint musical operations. By the early 50's, the two men ranked among England's most influential musical figures. The nature of their relationship was an open secret, universally known but never acknowledged, though some of their colleagues joked about it privately (*Billy Budd*, with its all-male cast, was dubbed *The Bugger's Opera* by an unknown wag), and more than a few musicians, Constant Lambert and the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham among them, complained—sometimes not so privately—about the backstage power wielded by the "Homintern."

The power was real, but so was the talent behind it. As a young man, Britten had told a friend, "I would be a 'court composer,' but for my pacifism and homosexuality." In the long run, neither one mattered. His music eventually became so popular, even beloved, that he achieved something closely approaching that status: in 1952, he was commissioned to compose the opera *Gloriana* in honor of the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II, and at the very end of his life he became the first composer to be elevated to the English peerage, taking the title of Lord Britten of Aldeburgh.

But Britten's star sank among younger musicians in inverse proportion to his popularity and prestige. No doubt the gradual drying-up of his inspiration was partly to blame—starting in the 60's, his music grew increasingly austere and noticeably less lyrical—but it was his persistent refusal to bow to the god of avant-gardism that was chiefly responsible for the eclipse of his reputation. Failing health also played a part: Britten never fully recovered from a 1972 heart operation (which he had put off as long as possible in order to finish *Death in Venice*), producing only a few isolated pieces between then and his death four years later.

IN 1977, a year after Britten died, the musicologist Philip Brett published an essay, "Britten and Grimes," in which he not only made explicit reference to the composer's homosexuality but declared that

> it is to the homosexual condition that *Peter Grimes* is addressed. At any rate, if we look at the opera in this allegorical way, the problems (both moral and dramatic) about Grimes's character fall away, the viciousness of [his] persecution becomes more explicable, and Peter's own tragedy, that of guilt and self-hatred, all the more poignant and relevant to people today.

This interpretation of *Peter Grimes* is by no means far-fetched, and subsequent revelations about the composer's private life, particularly the candid description of his inclinations supplied by Humphrey Carpenter in a 1992 biography, add force to the now widely accepted argument that it is impossible fully to understand his music without taking his sexuality into account. Yet such a critical perspective, while capable of providing valuable illumination, is ultimately unequal to the task of explaining Britten's enduring appeal.

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"Nothing can please many, and please long, but just representations of general nature," Samuel Johnson rightly observed in his "Preface to Shakespeare." Hence it is no coincidence that *Death in Venice*, with its equivocal hint of special pleading for a taste few listeners share, is the only one of Britten's operas that has consistently failed to engage audiences. Elsewhere, he is, like Copland and Tchaikovsky, not a prisoner of identity speaking only of and to his own kind, but a universal genius intelligible to everyone. Even in *The Turn of the Screw*—perhaps his best work, certainly his most disturbing—he succeeds in transcending the particularity of his sexual character and portraying the human dilemma in terms that speak directly to all men in all conditions.

Such is the stuff of artistic greatness. Though not all of Britten's music is of the first rank, much of it is comparable in quality to the finest compositions of the giants of modernism. To rank him with the likes of Bartók, Copland, Prokofiev, Shostakovich, Stravinsky, and Hindemith may seem unduly extravagant, but closer acquaintance with such works as *Peter Grimes*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, *A Ceremony of Carols*, and the Tenor-Horn Serenade—to name only five pieces that have stood the test of time—suggests that he was not only England's greatest composer, but one of the century's greatest as well. Certainly there has been no more prodigiously gifted musical artist, and few who have told us more about the darkest secrets of the human heart.

Britten on CD: A Select Discography

VIRTUALLY ALL of Britten's music is available on CD, much of it in performances by the composer himself. He made his first commercial recordings in 1941, and returned to the studio regularly until heart problems ended his public career in 1972. The word "definitive" is overused by critics, but most of the recordings he made of his own music—especially those featuring Peter Pears—have yet to be bettered. In addition, he performed and recorded an exceptionally wide variety of other works, and many of these interpretations are no less compelling.

Here are ten key recordings of Britten's music, followed by a sampling of his interpretations of works by other composers:

1940: Britten accompanied Pears at the piano in the first recording of *Seven Sonnets of Michelangelo*, Op. 22. This youthfully vital interpretation, set down on 78's shortly after the first performance in 1942, has been coupled on CD with the equally striking premiere recording of the Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings, Op. 31 (1943), featuring Pears, the incomparable horn player Dennis Brain, and the Boyd Neel String Orchestra, with the composer making his conducting debut (Pearl GEMM CD 9177).

1942: *A Ceremony of Carols*, Op. 28, an exquisite setting of medieval carol texts for boys' voices and harp, is sensitively performed by the St. John's College Choir, Cambridge, conducted by George Guest (London Jubilee 30097).

1945: Britten conducted the first complete recording of *Peter Grimes*, Op. 33, made in 1958 with Pears, the soprano Claire Watson, and the ensemble of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden. This performance, though not without flaw, remains by far the most compelling of the versions released to date (London 14577, two CD's).

1946: Though *The Young Person's Guide to the Orchestra*, Op. 34, has been recorded countless times, no one has performed this wonderfully winning piece with quite so much panache as Britten and the London Symphony (London 17509).

1951: *Billy Budd*, Op. 50, may be dramatically the strongest of Britten's large-house operas, and the first recording, with Pears as Captain Vere and the composer conducting the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, remains the best (London 17428, three CD's).

1954: *The Turn of the Screw*, Op. 54, was recorded shortly after its premiere by the cast of the original English Opera Group production, and this interpretation, led by Britten and captured in excellent monaural studio sound, is charged with all the intensity of a stage performance (London 25672, two CD's).

1962: Britten recorded his *War Requiem*, Op. 66, with Pears, the Russian soprano Galina Vishnevskaya, and the German baritone Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau—the singers were

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chosen to represent three of the nations that participated in World War II—accompanied by the London Symphony Orchestra and Chorus. Whatever one may think of the antiwar sentiments embodied in the poems of Wilfred Owen that the composer interwove with a traditional requiem mass, the result remains one of the century's most impressive oratorios (London 143-832, two CD's).

1963: *Nocturnal after John Dowland*, Op. 70, composed for the English guitarist Julian Bream and masterfully recorded by him in 1966, is a set of variations on the Dowland lute song, "Come, Heavy Sleep" (unusually, the theme is heard only at the end). One of the few extended works Britten wrote for a solo instrumentalist, it is among the most haunting of his many evocations of the world of sleep and dreams (RCA Victor Gold Seal 61601).

1976: The String Quartet No. 3, Op. 94, based in part on themes from *Death in Venice*, was Britten's last important composition, and perhaps the finest of his multi-movement instrumental pieces. It has been recorded several times, most effectively by the Lindsay Quartet (ASV CDDCA 608).

Four characteristic performances of works by other composers are Mozart's Symphony No. 40 in G Minor, K. 550, recorded in 1968 with the English Chamber Orchestra (London 44323, two CD's, coupled with other Mozart recordings by Britten); Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, recorded live in 1968 with the English Chamber Orchestra (BBC BBCB 8012-2); Mahler's Symphony No. 4, recorded live in 1961 with the London Symphony (BBC BBCB 8004-2); and Shostakovich's Symphony No. 14, Op. 135, recorded live in 1970 with Vishnevskaya, the bass Mark Rezhetin, and the English Chamber Orchestra (BBC BBCB 8013-2). In addition, Britten's classic recording with Pears of Schubert's *Winterreise*, currently out of print in the U.S., can be ordered from England via www.amazon.co.uk.

With the exception of the last item, the recordings listed above can be purchased online by viewing this article on COMMENTARY's website: www.commentarymagazine.com

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Books in Review

Body and Soul

The Fourth Great Awakening and the Future of Egalitarianism
by Robert William Fogel
Chicago. 383 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
James Q. Wilson

ROBERT FOGEL, a Nobel laureate in economics, is best known for his acutely original and politically controversial book, *Time on the Cross* (with Stanley L. Engerman, 1974), a study of the economics of American slavery. Now he has produced a long-awaited account of American life in which he hopes to show how technological changes, religious movements, and human improvement have interacted to produce a political culture that is, in his view, remarkably egalitarian in some respects but deeply contentious in others.

JAMES Q. WILSON, *whose books include* American Government *and* The Moral Sense, *is the Ronald Reagan professor of public policy at Pepperdine University.*

By the end of the 20th century Americans were vastly better off than they had been in 1900; better off, but just as discordant. That discord, however, is no longer centered on the material aspects of life. Thanks to the vast increase in worker productivity, improved communications and transportation, the advent of information technology, and the globalization of commercial markets, the basics of food, clothing, and shelter and the conveniences of leisure have become so abundant as to render divisions of economic class less relevant than they once were. In the 1930's, the Marxist Left protested against what it identified as the cause of the Great Depression, and many people were impressed; in 2000, the leftover Left protested against the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and nobody was impressed. Economic change and a more egalitarian society have deprived the Left of a credible enemy and hence of a large audience.

Today's discord, writes Fogel, is rather over the *im*material aspects of life: the competing arguments between, for example, those who believe in the right to an abortion and those who believe in the sanctity of life; between those who are for easy access to drugs and those who feel the need to prohibit them; between those who advocate an enlarged individualism and those who wish to preserve traditional family values. The cutting edge of this quarrel can be found in the great gap that has emerged between the religious Right (as the media call it) and secular humanism (as evangelicals call it). Many liberals worry more about whether a conservative political candidate has been captured by the religious Right than about where he stands on taxes; many conservatives are more upset by whether a liberal candidate has endorsed abortion, opposed school prayer, or tolerated easier divorce laws than by his stand on Medicare.

Bringing together the effects of economic and technological change with the new disputes over immaterial issues and the rise of new religious movements, Fogel has written not one but three books, each of which is only loosely related to the other two. The first, describing the changes in our material condition, is a masterpiece; the second, a recount-

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ing of what we have learned about religious awakenings, is an excellent summary of the relevant scholarship. As for the third, an explanation of why we need greater "equity" in our "spiritual assets" and how we can attain such equity, it would be better if it had never been written.

THERE HAS long been an argument among economic historians as to whether the Industrial Revolution of the 19th century did or did not make the ordinary person better off. By contrast, when it comes to the 20th century, there has long been a general consensus that, in a few developed nations, some people became much more affluent, but inequality increased. The problem with settling the argument over the 19th century or assessing the agreement over the 20th is that both have been formulated in monetary terms: the real wages of workers, distribution of income, and the like. Such terms are obviously important, but it is often hard to know for a certainty what a given wage could buy, or whether income inequality fully explains social and class divisions at a time when some people had virtually no income at all except for the food they could raise or steal.

Fogel's great accomplishment is to bring in biomedical measures of the human condition: how much food people had to eat, how tall and heavy they were, how long they could expect to live, their risk of fatality or chronic disease. Relying on these various measures of health, he concludes that economists have overestimated the improvement of human life during the 19th century, and underestimated it for the 20th.

Although the Industrial Revolution set the stage for improvement, Fogel writes, it did not actually *produce* much improvement until after 1890. Both the life expectancy and the height of the average white American male, which had risen somewhat during the latter part of the 18th century, actually declined during much of the 19th, only to explode upward during the 20th. In 1900, only half the people born 40 years earlier were still alive; today, 95 percent of the people born 40 years earlier are still alive. Although the average African-American male lives six years fewer than the average white male, the gap between the two races that existed in 1900 has been cut in half.

People have also gotten steadily taller, and not just in the U.S. In the middle of the 19th century, the average height of a fully grown Dutch male was 64 inches; today, it is 72 inches. Much of this improvement in physical well-being is the result of an increase in the supply of food, coupled with public-health measures that have reduced infant mortality, quarantined people with communicable diseases, and overcome the risk of infection that once came from living in big cities with impure water and inadequate sewage systems.

These gains, which once again occurred chiefly in the 20th century, have narrowed the physical differences among social classes. In the early 19th century, the average member of the British aristocracy was five inches taller than the average Englishman; today, the gap is only one inch. In 1875, a member of the British upper class lived seventeen years longer than the average Englishman; today, the rich enjoy only a two-year advantage. This means that, in about one century, the typical Englishman improved his life expectancy by 34 years, an increase that in Fogel's estimation exceeds any other such gain in the preceding 200 millennia.

Not only do most people now live as long and grow as tall as their social betters, but the difference in their income has also narrowed. Economists measure this difference using something called the Gini ratio. A Gini of zero means income is equally distributed; a Gini of one indicates maximum inequality. In Britain and the United States, the Gini ratio was .65 at the beginning of the 18th century, .55 at the beginning of the 20th, and only .32 in 1973. Contrary to the economists' consensus, the 20th century did not increase but rather reduced income inequality.

In America, some of this reduction came about as a result of government policy. Fogel estimates that in 1990, about $22,000 was taken in taxes from the average household in the top fifth of the income distribution and about $8,800 of that was paid to people in the bottom fifth, thereby raising the incomes of the poor. But no less significant in reducing inequality, Fogel believes, has been the substituting of human capital (that is, knowledge) for physical capital (that is, land and money). In the production of wealth, doing clever things with your mind has become more important than inheriting money.

It is true that, since 1973, inequality has leveled off or increased. This may be because human capital has yet to be extended to everyone, or because some people, however exposed they are to modern education, have not acquired or will not acquire that capital. But, according to Fogel, much of the rise in income inequality since 1973 can also be explained by changes in the way people work. While the more affluent are working harder and for longer hours, the less affluent have begun to work less, thus widening the income gap. (This is in sharp contrast to the 1890's, when the richest worked fewer hours than the less rich.) Another complication is that even as the real income of the least affluent workers has declined since 1973, their expenditures have increased, owing to time spent in educational programs, moving from one job to another, or going through a bad patch in business. During such periods people live off their savings; but the great majority—nearly three-fourths—also move out of the low-income category every year as a new group moves in.

Fogel's analysis provides powerful support for the idea that the gains now enjoyed by Americans

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were won jointly by rapid economic growth and sound public health. But he does not recount these facts to prove that all is well; to the contrary, as I have indicated, his argument is that these same gains have shifted cultural and political discourse from economic envy to what might be called spiritual issues. Whether this is as clear as he claims may be a matter of dispute, but he does not pause on that question. Instead, in what I have called his second book, he tries to show that the shift itself can be understood in terms of a new religious awakening.

There have been three religious awakenings in American history. The first began around 1730 and created the background for the American Revolution. The second began in about 1800 and culminated in the attack on slavery. The third began around 1890 and, while it lasted, gave a moral edge to the Progressive movement and created the notion of a Social Gospel.

In narrating these momentous popular changes, Fogel follows the work of William G. McLoughlin, whose 1978 book, *Revivals, Awakenings, and Reform*, is an interesting examination of how religious impulses have had profound consequences in American political history. McLoughlin himself speculates that a fourth great awakening may have started around 1960, and it is in this possibility that Fogel locates the message of what he himself calls the central chapter of his book, "The Emergence of a Postmodern Egalitarian Agenda."

But there is a problem here, evident in McLoughlin and magnified in Fogel. The First Great Awakening was clearly religious in nature. It featured the young Reverend George Whitefield, an extraordinarily successful preacher who told his enraptured audiences that God was not only just but merciful. Every man and woman, by accepting personal responsibility, could be saved from damnation—*and* could enjoy the unique blessings offered by the free government of the new United States. What was new about this government was that it was subordinate to the people; but this meant that the people had to accept the challenge of governing themselves. The link between the powerful, un-Puritanical religious view expounded by Whitefield and many other itinerant revivalists and the demand for colonial independence soon became obvious. As the historian Gordon Wood has put it, "revolution, republicanism, and [religious] regeneration all blended in American thinking."

The Second Great Awakening was also heavily religious in tone, but we are now speaking of a different kind of religion. This one emphasized the teachings of the Enlightenment, and it animated not just country folk attending tent revivals but rebellious college students eager to remake society and city dwellers interested in philosophical refinement. The great revivalist this time around was Charles Finney; unlike Whitefield, he did not remain a preacher but became a professor of theology (at Oberlin College). This awakening had its greatest effect in the North, where it soon provided the basis for the Anti-Slavery Society under William Lloyd Garrison and Theodore Weld—a development that made its religious view anathema in the South.

The Third Great Awakening, in the early 20th century, was even more divided. As a mass movement, it was led by preachers like Billy Sunday; but it also had an elite, Social Gospel wing, led by Walter Rauschenbusch. Sunday, who had a magnetic influence on ordinary people, was reviled by the emerging "smart set" for his denunciation of Darwin and support of Prohibition. Rauschenbusch, by contrast, thought religion meant the brotherhood of man ratified by broad new social legislation, and so he became an important part of the Progressive movement. His allies helped found the American Economic Associa-

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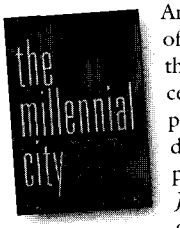

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tion, an organization that according to Richard T. Ely, one of its first leaders, regarded the doctrine of laissez-faire as "unsafe in politics and unsound in morals." Business was wrong because it believed in profits; Jesus, by contrast, had been the first socialist. When Eugene V. Debs ran for President in 1904 on the socialist line, Rauschenbusch proclaimed socialism a halfway house to the kingdom of God on earth.

In other words, the religious element in the Third Great Awakening led less to a widespread awakening than to a deep political and cultural divide. Liberals had begun to distance themselves from conservatives; neither side was likely to think that the differences between them could be resolved by a better reading of the Bible.

Now McLoughlin and, following him, Fogel have come along to write of a Fourth Great Awakening, and one is thoroughly puzzled by what they mean. To McLoughlin it seems to have a lot to do with the "death of God," the secular city, the Beat Generation, the rise of rock 'n' roll, a concern about civil rights, and opposition to the war in Vietnam. In his account of the political culture of the late 20th century there is very little left of religion and a good deal of hope concerning the need for "Judeo-Christian socialism."

Fogel takes a different tack, acknowledging the importance of evangelical Christianity and its concern for spiritual reform. He notes, correctly, that evangelical churches are the only part of American Christianity that is growing rapidly—in his estimate, 60 million Americans adhere to some form of "enthusiastic religion"—and he shows how the Moral Majority of the late 1970's became transformed into the culturally broader, politically more sophisticated Christian Coalition. He also writes sympathetically about the religious Right's concern for traditional family values, by which he means families bent on rearing decent children.

The rise of the religious Right was brought about, in Fogel's judgment, by the same technological change that led to the new material egalitarianism—especially improvements in the efficiency with which communications are carried out, transportation is organized, and information is manipulated and exploited. He may have a point. But there are rival explanations. Some analysts, for example, think the religious Right has grown in reaction to the rapid expansion of civil rights for black Americans; others believe it is a rejoinder to undemocratic decisions made by the Supreme Court concerning abortion and school prayer; still others think it reflects a response to the excesses of individualistic hedonism. Fogel does not address these alternative explanations.

Besides, if the Fourth Great Awakening can be traced chiefly to technological causes, what about the Third? No doubt speedy ocean liners brought immigrants here in large numbers, thereby giving rise to anti-immigration sentiment; no doubt mass production made possible the growth of vast new corporations, thereby giving rise to anticapitalist sentiments. But Fogel does not make a case for such an interpretation. And no wonder: neither the followers of Billy Sunday nor those of Walter Rauschenbusch talked much about technology; the former talked, instead, about personal spiritual redemption and the latter about greed, profits, and human equality. It would be nice to link history to technology, but there is more going on in human life than can be explained by how things are produced.

BUT HAS there, in fact, been a Fourth Great Awakening? In some limited sense, yes, but it is not one that has affected how the nation as a whole defines its culture, nor is it one that operates, like earlier awakenings, against a rival religious view. Liberal Americans who are deeply suspicious of the religious Right are either determined to maintain a strict separation between church and state or are sympathetic to such groups as the National Council of Churches or Reform Judaism, which represent the religious Left (though the media never so characterize them). We are, in short, a partially religious nation, and our cultural conflicts do not pit one religion against another so much as they set nonreligious Americans against their religious rivals.

Describing our present situation in terms of a religious awakening thus leaves the reader with, at best, a fuzzy view of reality. And this fuzziness only gets worse when Fogel proceeds to explain that the Fourth Great Awakening has made Americans in general concerned about "spiritual equity" and "access to spiritual assets," among which are to be found "a sense of purpose" and "self-esteem."

Unless I fail to understand the term "equity," it cannot be used to describe spiritual matters. Most people are to some degree decent, honest, and sympathetic, and many are God-fearing. One can argue that they should become more so, but that is hardly the same thing as suggesting that there is some equitable distribution of decency or sympathy or religiosity.

Using the word equity helps Fogel balance what he claims were the accomplishments of the Third Great Awakening (creating a fairer, more equitable society) with what he hopes will be the achievement of the Fourth (getting our moral lives back in order). But equity cannot be used to cover both cases. The fight over abortion is not a fight about fairness or balance, which is what equity means, but one over competing versions of right and wrong.

AND THAT brings me to the third and final book contained in *The Fourth Great Awakening*: Fogel's listing of what he would do to deal with the "spiritual inequity" he has described. If I pass over this portion lightly, it is because I do not want to draw the reader away from his fascinating first book and his interest-

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ing second. But let me offer a sample. According to Fogel, we can acquire more "spiritual equity" through "the democratization of self-realization," to be accomplished by "life-long education" accompanied by a "sense of purpose," a "vision of opportunity," a "strong family ethic," engagement with "diverse groups," a "thirst for knowledge," and greater "self-esteem."

I hope the legislature in my home state of California does not create a task force to come up with ways of accomplishing these things, although, to judge by past experience, it might. What I can advise the reader, at any rate, is to skip pages 202 to 217. You will not miss anything worth knowing, you will spare yourself puzzlement as to how a Nobel laureate could write in such a fashion, and you will not be put off from remembering a great deal that is worth knowing in the preceding 200 pages.

When the Twain Meet

The Multiple Identities of the Middle East
by Bernard Lewis
Schocken. 163 pp. $21.00

A Middle East Mosaic: Fragments of Life, Letters, and History
Selected and edited by Bernard Lewis
Random House. 469 pp. $30.00

Reviewed by
Efraim Karsh

For over 50 years, Bernard Lewis, the Cleveland E. Dodge professor emeritus of Near Eastern studies at Princeton, has been illuminating audiences around the world on the culture and history of Islam and the region that gave birth to it, known since the last century as the Middle East. His book, *The Arabs in History*, first published in 1950 and still in print today in several languages, is generally regarded as the foremost historiographical account of its subject. So is *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961), a penetrating study of the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the birth of its successor as a modern-day nation state. Several years ago, Lewis set forth a single-volume synthesis of his expansive erudition in *The Middle East: A Brief History of the Last 2,000 Years* (1996), which surveys the region from the rise of Christianity to the present day.

In *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, Lewis has executed yet another tour de force, exploring the ways in which Middle Easterners have viewed themselves and the "other" from antiquity to the present era. In this book he traces the evolution of race, religion, and language in the diverse societies of the region while also examining how these societies have assimilated (or failed to assimilate) such 20th-century concepts as fascism, socialism, nationalism, and liberalism. And by way of underscoring his findings, he has assembled a companion volume, aptly titled *A Middle East Mosaic*, that offers a diverse collection of observations by Middle Easterners about Westerners, and Westerners about Middle Easterners, over the same extended period. Taken together, the two books present a fascinating picture of the often conflicting identities and loyalties of the region's populations, while also exposing us to the prejudice, ignorance, suspicion—and occasional insight—with which West-

Efraim Karsh *is professor and head of Mediterranean studies at King's College, University of London. His* Empires of the Sand *was reviewed by Daniel Pipes in the January* Commentary.

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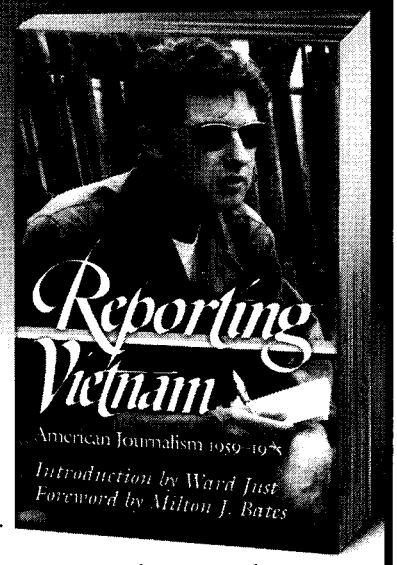

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erners and Middle Easterners have armed themselves as they conduct their process of mutual discovery.

It is in the latter of these realms that the main merit of Lewis's new books lies. For quite some time now, Middle Eastern studies in universities have been dominated by what may be termed a culture of victimization. Articulated most forcefully by Edward Said of Columbia University, it views the Arab populations of the Middle East as the hapless victims of an alien encroachment, and blames the region's endemic malaise on Western political and cultural imperialism. As the quotations in *A Middle East Mosaic* demonstrate, this supine self-image, with its implicit admission of political and cultural inferiority, is historically false.

EARLY ARAB historians saw their own societies as supreme and all others as backward or otherwise flawed. The Turks, for instance, were noted for "treachery, hardness of heart, and indelicacy," while Jews were "renowned, in every age and climate, for their wickedness and slyness." As for Northern Europeans, they "lack[ed] keenness of understanding and clarity of intelligence and [were] overcome by ignorance and apathy, lack of discernment, and stupidity." Black Africans were held in the lowest esteem, being considered by the eminent medieval Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun as "the only people who accept slavery . . . owing to their low degree of humanity and their proximity to the animal stage." Other Arab sources describe them as "feckless cattle . . . stinking, and crinkly-haired, with uneven limbs, deficient minds, and depraved passions."

In adducing such examples, Lewis is hardly seeking to denigrate Middle Eastern attitudes at the expense of the West. Instead, he places them within the widest possible context, characterizing them as a reflection of the almost universal predilection to stereotype and stigmatize. But he also and most usefully sees them as arising out of the longstanding mutual acrimony between Christianity and Islam. Historically, as Lewis writes, both religions shared the view that

> there is only one final salvation of God's truth and that salvation can only be achieved by that truth, preferably from its authorized exponents. . . . Both possessors of God's last word believed they had a duty to bring this word to all humanity, that is, to convert the infidels.

These mutually exclusive convictions were at the root of the millennial struggle between Christianity and Islam, first for the control of the Mediterranean and then for world domination, with the attendant vicious circle of "*jihad* [holy war] and Crusade, conquest and reconquest." No less importantly, they also constituted an inextricable part of the prolonged imperial legacy of both East and West.

To be sure, the circumstances in which the two religions emerged were diametrically opposed. Christianity, as Lewis points out, rose "amid the fall of an empire," while Islam rose "amid the birth of an empire, and became the creed of a vast, triumphant, and flourishing realm, created under the aegis of a new faith." Yet it was through the agency of empire that both religions made their bid for world domination, converting en masse the vast populations coming under their sway by both peaceful and violent means. And while a theological gulf separated their attitudes toward the possession and exercise of political power, with Christianity articulating a clear dichotomy between God and Caesar, and Islam combining the two realms in the person of the sultan-caliph, in practice the two religions often converged.

For one thing, successive Christian emperors no less than their Muslim counterparts regarded themselves as "defenders of the faith." For another, the Islamic world often borrowed ideas from its Christian rival, particularly in structuring ecclesiastical institutions. This process, Lewis observes, reached its summit in contemporary Iran, where, "for the first time in Muslim history, we find the functional equivalent of bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and—some would argue—even a pope."

TODAY, OF course, Christianity is no longer in a militant mode. And one might even say that, rhetorical appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the Islamic side, too, has gradually abated its confrontationist stance toward the West. As their domains have come under growing pressure from Western powers, Muslim rulers have proved themselves increasingly pragmatic, interested far more in the temporal goal of preservation of power than in the practice of *jihad*. Just as the Ottoman empire used the great European powers to secure a long lease on life, so Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the high priest of radical Islam, was not deterred from acquiring weapons from the "Great Satan," the United States, to secure his Islamic republic. Imperceptibly, the millenarian "clash of civilizations" has given way to a pattern of self-interested cooperation punctuated by conflict.

Of course, such political cooperation is purely instrumental, unaccompanied, at least so far, by a corresponding acceptance of Western doctrines and values. The ambivalence that is the hallmark of this posture is evident across the board from Iran at one extreme to Egypt and Jordan at the other, and it underscores the pervasive problem of identity that continues to bedevil so many Middle Eastern societies today. Once again we are in Bernard Lewis's debt for incisively analyzing—and evoking—this problem, and the web of contrasting interests, loyalties, and perceptions that support it.

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The Old Soldier

MacArthur's War:
Korea and the Undoing
of An American Hero
by Stanley Weintraub
Free Press. 385 pp. $27.50

Reviewed by
Robert Elegant

General Douglas MacArthur was the U.S. Army's most daring strategist of the century just past, responsible for some of its most imaginative triumphs as well as some of its most disastrous blunders. Both sides of this record were on full display in the Korean war, a conflict that I covered for the Overseas News Agency and the International News Service and in which Stanley Weintraub, not yet the historian and biographer he was to become, served as a lieutenant on the staff of a U.S.-run prisoner-of-war camp. (Over the ensuing decades our paths have crossed briefly on several occasions, and for reasons unknown my name appears on the long list of those acknowledged in this book.) Today a professor at Penn State and the author of, among many other books, *Disraeli* (1993) and *The Last Great Victory* (1995), Weintraub has now returned to Korea with a close history of the precarious eleven months in which MacArthur led American forces from disaster to triumph to disaster.

The American "police action," as President Harry Truman called it, began 50 years ago this June, after Washington deluded itself, and misled the Communist world, into thinking that South Korea lay outside the U.S. defense perimeter. When troops from the Communist North suddenly rolled south across the 38th parallel, Truman switched gears and marshaled a United Nations coalition to fight.

Initially, things did not go at all well. Charged with running the war from his post as supreme commander of conquered and occupied Japan, MacArthur, who had built a sterling reputation in World War II as the dauntless leader of Allied forces in the South Pacific, dribbled unprepared, under-strength, and unmotivated U.S. occupation troops into battle. They were all he had at his disposal, and the immediate emergency was acute, but their World War II-vintage bazookas were mere "paint-scratchers" against the modern Soviet-built tanks that led the assault. South Korea's capital, Seoul, less than 30 miles from the border, succumbed within a week, its defenders forced to retreat to the port of Pusan hundred of miles to the south.

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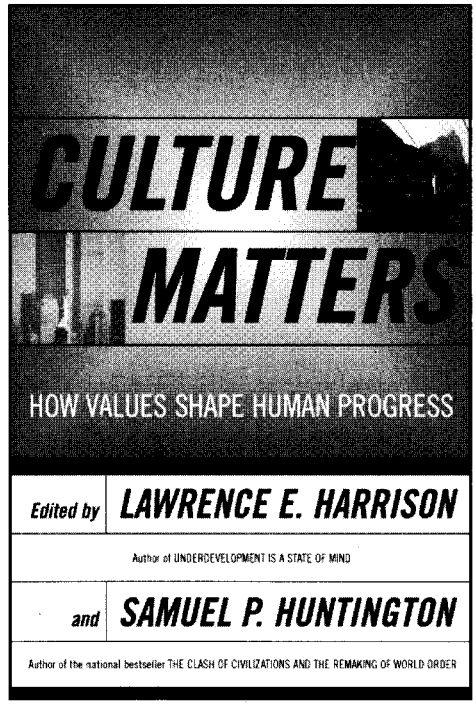
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In September 1950, barely a month and a half after the Communist invasion, MacArthur, in one of the most ingenious and glorious feats of his career, landed a strong force at the thinly defended port of Inchon near Seoul. (Because of a 30-foot variation in water level from low to high tide in the narrow harbor at Inchon, both North Korea and a skeptical Pentagon had concluded that no sane commander would attempt a landing there.) Cut off from supplies and reinforcements by the American pincer operation, the Communist army in the South began to disintegrate. Seoul was retaken, and North and South Korea were once more divided at approximately the previous border.

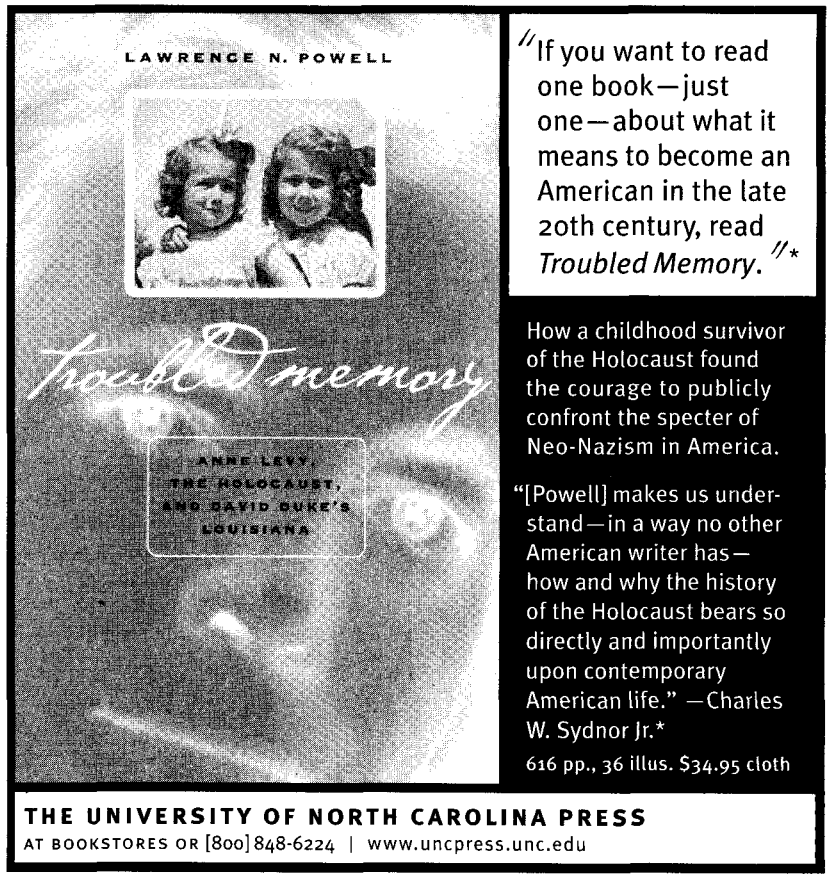
Washington had attained its original objective of driving out the invaders, but now MacArthur's superiors encouraged him to "liberate" all of North Korea by marching to the frontier of Chinese Manchuria. MacArthur had even more ambitious plans. He wanted to draw China into the fight so that the U.S. could, once and for all, destroy the "international Communist conspiracy," if necessary by means of nuclear weapons.

MacArthur succeeded in drawing China into the fight, but, as Weintraub vividly shows, not in the way he had planned. By October, so-called People's Volunteers—actually, regular Communist Chinese soldiers—began moving stealthily into Korea. Yet even as their strength mounted to a quarter of a million men (later to rise to more than three-quarters of a million), MacArthur continued to ignore the clear evidence that China meant to enter the war.

When Mao Zedong finally launched a massive assault, MacArthur's response was appallingly slow. American and South Korean forces were forced into headlong retreat. In short order, Seoul was once again conquered by Communist forces. Under General Matthew Ridgway, who was summoned to lead the troops in the field, Seoul was then retaken—and razed in the fighting. But MacArthur, in violation of explicit orders, now began to demand ever more insistently that the U.S. strike directly at China, a move that would undermine any possibility of a negotiated conclusion to the fight. When he went so far as to criticize Truman's conduct of the war publicly and repeatedly, the President stripped him of his command. As for the U.S.-led "police action," it continued for another two years, costing 34,000 American soldiers their lives and leaving an estimated 1.4 million South Koreans dead, wounded, or missing.

MacArthur was beyond question a great man, almost as great as he believed himself to be. But as Weintraub makes clear, he was impelled into both his triumphs and his debacles by the same character flaw: a self-confidence so overweening that it amounted to a conviction of infallibility. Decades of unrelenting flattery by the sycophants with whom he had surrounded himself left him with a tendency to disregard any opinion, indeed any fact, that conflicted with his own view of things. The isolation of power bred near-megalomania and impregnable insensitivity. In the end, the fame he had justly won in World War II was deeply tarnished by the catastrophes of Korea, as well as by his overwhelming arrogance.

Along with his probing of this "undoing of an American hero," Weintraub recounts lucidly and in great detail the exceptionally bloody and turbulent struggle on the Korean peninsula. His narrative helps to place in perspective an episode now being investigated by the Pentagon 50 years after the event—an alleged massacre of hundreds of Ko-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rean refugees by U.S. forces under a bridge near the hamlet of No Gun Ri. Whatever the exact sequence of events at No Gun Ri, from Weintraub's account of the fighting in Korea one comes away with a renewed appreciation of what can happen in the fog of war, particularly when a small force unfamiliar with the terrain is fighting to halt an offensive by greatly superior and better-armed foes. In Korea, an additional element of confusion arose from the Communist infiltrators and saboteurs who regularly wore civilian clothing and blended into the local population "like fish in the water," as Mao Zedong had counseled them to do.

Though I personally witnessed no massacres of civilians in Korea, I do not doubt that individual and collective acts of barbarism occurred. The crucial point to bear in mind, however, is that there is no evidence, or even any credible allegation, that Americans deliberately killed civilians whom they knew to be civilians. And even if such inexcusable acts could be shown to have occurred, this would hardly erase the fundamental difference between American and Communist behavior.

The U.S. high command never ordered either captives or civilians slain; indeed, the hundreds of thousands of North Korean and Chinese soldiers taken prisoner in the war, if they were lucky enough to fall into American hands, were fed and cared for. The Communists, by contrast, massacred in accordance with commands from above, often from the very top. When the North Koreans took Seoul, their secret police and soldiers slaughtered thousands of "class enemies."

THOUGH ITS central focus is Korea, *MacArthur's War* sheds light on patterns of Chinese foreign policy that continue in force to the present day. Mao, Weintraub shows, eagerly encouraged the North to invade the South, and was pleased when MacArthur gave him reason to send his own armies into the fray. Though he genuinely feared an American stab into Manchuria, Mao's chief purpose was to demonstrate China's new military power, to make China respected because it was strong.

But in the aftermath of the war and in the decades to come, having learned his lesson the hard way, Mao confined himself to thundering. MacArthur's initial success at Inchon and the subsequent battering of Chinese forces in the conflict led to an extreme reluctance on the part of Beijing to become engaged in yet another ground war, particularly where the possibility loomed of American intervention. In the battle over Vietnam, for example, China never provided troops or even defensive air power to its North Vietnamese allies, limiting assistance instead to supplies and armaments. It is of course possible that, had the U.S. actually invaded North Vietnam and marched toward the Chinese border, Beijing's response would have been different; but such a move was never in the cards (partly because of the lesson learned in Korea by the *American* side).

Taking a much longer perspective, one might even argue that Mao's reluctance in the aftermath of Korea to extend China's power by open force of arms dealt a blow to Communist rule worldwide. The Kremlin in particular took note of the implications of China's bloody nose. In the 1950's and 60's, although the USSR moved directly against uprisings in "fraternal, socialist" Hungary and Czechoslovakia, there were no military assaults by Soviet forces on established Western (or Western-supported) governments. Despite many detours and deviations on the long road, Korea might thus be said to have begun a wind-down of Communist power that ended with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

If so, Douglas MacArthur could also be seen in retrospect as having helped to hasten the collapse of the "international Communist conspiracy"—though hardly in the manner he had intended. The moral, if moral there need be, is the old one that those who make policy often aim at one target and hit another. Success, like failure, can come about in unexpected ways.

Out of Africa

Taboo:
Why Black Athletes
Dominate Sports and
Why We Are Afraid to
Talk About It
by Jon Entine

Public Affairs. 387 pp. $25.00

Reviewed by
Dan Seligman

DO BLACK athletes have innate physical advantages? The six-pack brigades watching them on television take it for granted that they do, and this is also the view of numerous highly qualified scholars. One who is quoted in this book is the anthropologist Vincent Sarich of the University of California at Berkeley: "If you can believe that individuals of recent African ancestry are not genetically advantaged over those of European and Asian ancestry in certain athletic endeavors, then you probably could be led to believe just about anything."

Still, the case for innate advantage continues to give jitters to the opinion-making classes, who are far more comfortable with environmental explanations, and especially with the notion that blacks dominate sports because discrimination has barred them from alternative careers. This standard line was ritualistically recit-

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DAN SELIGMAN *is a contributing editor of* Forbes *and the author of* A Question of Intelligence: The IQ Debate in America.

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ed by Jim Holt in his *New York Times* review of *Taboo*: "The explanation for why every men's world record at every standard track distance belongs to an athlete of African descent may turn out to be purely sociological—hard work, a dearth of opportunities elsewhere."

But this is hardly what *Taboo* tells us. Although it meanders all over the lot and is sloppily argued and clumsily written, almost despite itself it is utterly persuasive in making the case that black athletic superiority is genetic in nature. The author, Jon Entine, a former television producer, collaborated with Tom Brokaw a decade ago on an NBC News documentary entitled *Black Athletes: Fact and Fiction*. Arguing powerfully that blacks are "naturally" better athletes, the show won a mixture of pans and plaudits, but when Entine proposed a book on the subject he ran into nothing but nervousness in the politically correct world of publishing; he had accumulated a dozen or so rejections before Public Affairs took the project on.

The argument for genetically based black superiority in sports becomes compelling when you combine two sets of data. First and most obvious is the fact that ever since segregation barriers were removed, American blacks, 12 percent of the adult U.S. population, have become wildly overrepresented in big-time sports. A dearth of opportunities falls well short of explaining these gains, because black athletes have at all points been competing with a far larger population of talented white athletes, and for careers offering very high salaries and star-kissed celebrity.

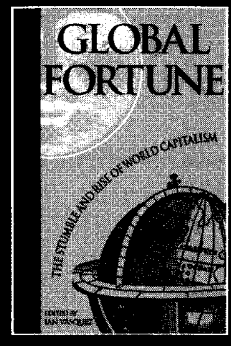
No, the most parsimonious explanation resides in the second set of data: the well-established physical differences that point to black superiority in underlying athletic skills. The physical data also explain why other ethnic groups remain significantly *under*represented in American sports. Asians, especially, are nearly invisible, unless you count table tennis.

In mid-April of this year, the *New York Times* sports section published color photographs of all 31 of this year's first-round draft choices for the National Football League (NFL). Twenty-four were black. Overall, black representation in the NFL now exceeds 60 percent, and is apparently still growing. Similarly, the National Basketball Association, which was entirely white until 1950, is now about 80-percent black, and among the league's stars that figure may run closer to 95 percent. In major-league baseball, blacks have been slipping somewhat as Latin American athletes have increasingly come to the fore, especially in middle-infield positions, but even so the black share remains over a third.

The story of black physical superiority turns out to be two separate stories. One centers on East Africans, and especially Kenyans, who completely dominate long-distance running but do not ordinarily live in the United States and are not represented in our big-league team sports. Dominating *those* sports and getting the high-round draft picks are American blacks descended from slaves who were brought here, overwhelmingly, from West Africa. The two groups have quite different physical profiles and athletic talents.

In the early pages of *Taboo*, Entine devotes a great deal of space to the Kenyans, especially to a tribal group in the Great Rift Valley called the Kalenjins. We have become accustomed to seeing Kenyans win the New York and Boston marathons, but the degree of their dominance in distance running is nothing short of staggering. Ten years ago, a Scandinavian researcher named Bengt Saltin, observing that both Nordic and Kenyan runners showed blood

THE STUMBLE AND RISE OF WORLD CAPITALISM



After two world wars, the Great Depression, and experiments with socialism interrupted the liberal economic order that began in the 19th century, the world economy has now returned at the very least to the level of globalization that it previously enjoyed. Capitalism has made the 20th century one of unrivaled prosperity, yet critics still fault markets for spreading instability and poverty—citing financial crises in Asia and elsewhere as evidence. These essays assess such claims, propose improvements to the international financial system, and evaluate the prospects that the recent conversion to global capitalism will be sustained. Contributors include Deepak Lal, Julian Simon, Mario Vargas Llosa, Lawrence H. White, and Andrei Illarionov, chief economic adviser to Russian president Vladimir V. Putin.

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levels low in lactic acid—signifying muscles that fatigue less easily—became curious to see how the two groups would match up in a competition. He arranged for a half-dozen top-tier Swedish distance runners to be brought to Kenya and race against teams from one local high school in the Rift Valley. It was a stunning experience for the Swedes, who were badly and repetitively beaten in races from 800 meters to ten kilometers. In this one small geographical area, Saltin concluded, there were at least 500 schoolboys who could beat Scandinavia's champions.

The Kenyans' abilities neatly reflect the advantages in evolutionary "fitness" of a group based for thousands of years in a sparsely settled, mountainous, sunny environment. The Kalenjins today have slender hips, relatively long legs, and ectomorphic physiques that help to dissipate heat. Kenyans, in general, also have a superior ability to metabolize oxygen, and, according to Saltin, the greatest aerobic potential of any group ever measured on the planet.

The West African physique is quite different, and typically of the muscular, mesomorphic variety. The evolutionary pressures that produced it are a matter of conjecture—Entine does not pursue the issue—but there seems to be no doubt about its genetic character. This physique features relatively low levels of body fat and high levels of bone density (a combination that, since it reduces buoyancy, may explain why American blacks are underrepresented in competitive swimming). More to the point are the muscles, whose long, "fast-twitch" fibers make possible an explosive speed and extraordinary jumping ability.

Among white athletes, a jump of 33 percent of one's height is considered impressive; among athletes of West African descent, jumps of 50 percent are common, and some NBA stars have been measured above 60 percent. The white-men-can't-jump stereotype is thus all too faithful to reality. American black athletes may not do as well as whites in distance running, but they do far better in sprints. At distances of up to 400 meters, all world running records are held by athletes of West African origin. Not one white or Asian runner is represented among the top 200 times recorded for the 100-meter sprint.

I HAVE said that *Taboo* meanders. The argument I have so far described is taken from only two or three of Entine's 24 chapters; the rest sail blithely past it, treating the reader to some hugely irrelevant stories that for the most part seem designed to reach out to those who might be offended by the central genetic thesis. Huge chunks of the text are given over to feel-good stories: there is, for example, a whole chapter dwelling on the 1936 Berlin Olympics, where Jesse Owens put the Nazis in their place, and another long chapter is given over to the boxing career of Joe Louis, culminating, of course, in his dramatic one-round demolition of Hitler's favorite, Max Schmeling, in their dramatic 1938 rematch. There is even a chapter on the days when American Jews showed prowess in basketball, allowing Entine to comment that, since basketball has always been an inner-city game, it was only natural that blacks would take it over as they replaced Jews in inner-city neighborhoods. This is, to say the least, a jarring point to come across in a book that decisively demonstrates blacks' innate abilities at basketball.

One can only guess at the reason for all these backward-leaning irrelevancies. (A tip-off may reside in Entine's grateful acknowledgment to his editor at Public Affairs press, who "reshaped what was an intriguing manuscript into a thoughtful book.") But what, then, about the second part of Entine's subtitle: why the issue of black "innate superiority" is so nervous-making, and "*why* we are afraid to talk about it"? After hovering inconclusively over this question, he takes a final and seemingly promising swing at it in the last few pages. There we read: "Of course, we all know what is behind this contentiousness. The elephant in the living room is intelligence."

One waits expectantly to be told by Entine that this subject has been placed off-limits because, once you start talking about racial differences, you are only a step removed from the awkward fact that blacks, on average, have lower IQ's than whites. That would certainly be a plausible point to make, and to discuss frankly and fully. But it turns out that Entine is not up to even mentioning it. Instead, what he confides to the reader is that we all labor under the unfortunate stereotype of athletes as "dense," and this general stereotype is now clinging to blacks "like a barnacle to a boat . . . because blacks are starring in disproportionate numbers in almost all sports."

Why there was no elephant in the living room when whites dominated American sports, Entine does not say. Evidently there are some taboos that even *Taboo* is afraid to break.

The Free World

In the Shadow of the Garrison State: America's Anti-Statism and Its Cold War Grand Strategy
by Aaron L. Friedberg
Princeton. 351 pp. $21.95

Reviewed by
Patrick Glynn

BY NOW, most of us have a pretty good idea of how it is that democracy triumphed over dictatorship in the great strategic com-

PATRICK GLYNN, *the author of* Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War, *writes widely on foreign affairs.*

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petition of the 20th century. But the fact remains that few could have predicted such a result.

Democracy, being an inherently weak form of government, was believed by many serious students of politics to be at a grave disadvantage in any protracted struggle with a totalitarian state. Not only were dictatorships more aggressive, they were also thought to possess certain natural strategic assets: centralized decision-making, a greater scope for long-term planning, the knack of keeping secrets, and above all a greater ability to extract resources from society to feed their military machines. Little did we anticipate that the Soviet Union's textbook advantages would prove in the long run to be its undoing. Nor would we have thought that America's repeated reluctance to match the USSR in an all-out military mobilization would be one key to our success.

Only now are scholars beginning to focus on these realities, which take us beyond the familiar debate between hawk and dove, militarist and antimilitarist, that occupied so much attention during the cold war. In his lucid and meticulously documented study, *In the Shadow of the Garrison State*, Aaron L. Friedberg, a professor of international affairs at Princeton, advances the original argument that one particularly powerful factor in shaping the American response to the cold war was democratic "antistatism." Moreover, this ethos—the well-known popular and business hostility to "big government"—turned out, in Friedberg's view, to be a crucial strategic asset. It served to moderate the American military response to the Soviet challenge while at the same time helping to preserve the economic, technological, and cultural vitality that proved so crucial to victory.

The roots of the American antistatist tradition are to be found in two sources that Friedberg traces in some detail. One of them is the Constitution, a document imbued with what Samuel Huntington has called an "antipower ethic." Not only were the framers intensely suspicious of power, but their wariness was reinforced by a need to accommodate their Anti-Federalist opponents—those cantankerous ideological ancestors of today's libertarians and antigovernment conservatives. This distrust of state power, already deeply ingrained in American political culture, was then further strengthened by the second factor Friedberg adduces: the rise of capitalism and the ideology of "free enterprise."

By the mid-to-late 19th century, powerful cultural, intellectual, and economic forces thus combined to act as a brake on the growth of gov-

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ernment. Although the American state did expand, it was only in response to definite crises—either war or major socioeconomic instability or both. And after each crisis—whether the Civil War, the upheavals of the Progressive era, or World War I—antistatist forces quickly reasserted themselves to compel a retrenchment in government's role.

At the end of World War II, the time was again ripe for such a retrenchment. Americans were fed up with Washington. The war, notes Friedberg, had

> brought more Americans than ever before into direct contact with the federal government, whether as taxpayers, draftees, suppliers of goods and services, or clippers of ration coupons. The results, not surprisingly, were frustration, irritation, and the rapid evaporation of whatever enthusiasm for a more powerful central state remained from the early days of the New Deal.

It was in this climate that the Republicans took over Congress in the landslide victory of 1946 with the simple slogan, "Had Enough?"

Alongside such popular sentiments there emerged a challenge to statism of an intellectual nature. Friedrich Hayek's libertarian classic *The Road to Serfdom*, first published in Britain in 1944, became an American bestseller. In influential writings, Princeton professor Edward S. Corwin warned that the unusual concentration of power in the executive, driven by the New Deal and war, was doing violence to the separation of powers. And everybody worried about the bomb, with intellectuals of the day like George Orwell commonly viewing atomic weapons as strengthening the hand of the state against the citizen.

Finally, there was the postwar reawakening of the American business lobby, which, among other things, campaigned vociferously for a rollback of federal encroachments and a reaffirmation of "free enterprise." One postwar leaflet circulated by the National Association of Manufacturers actually characterized the American Revolution as a rebellion against "government planners" in London.

Friedberg's account is valuable in bringing these wider and often very influential voices into the history of early cold-war strategic debate. For together they created a climate in which, despite mounting international crisis, sharp increases in U.S. defense spending were made unlikely if not impossible. Republicans and Southern Democrats in Congress lobbied for tax cuts, while President Truman fretted about budget deficits that he considered,

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in Friedberg's words, "not only dangerous, but positively immoral."

Neither the Berlin crisis nor the Soviet test of an atomic bomb led to a major military countermobilization on the American side. Friedberg makes a convincing case that even NSC 68—the famous 1950 document used by Secretary of State Dean Acheson and policy planner Paul Nitze to press Truman for a defense upsurge—did not suffice to change the administration's course. American remobilization came only with the onset of war itself. It was the Soviet-sponsored North Korean aggression, rather than any initiative by Washington policymakers, that created what liberal historians later lamented as the American "national security state." And even then, as Friedberg notes, the initial wartime "spike" in defense spending was extraordinarily short-lived.

In this connection, Friedberg also casts important light on President Eisenhower's contribution to American grand strategy. Although the Truman administration is rightly credited with the international institution-building that gave shape to the "free world"—in particular, the Marshall Plan and NATO—Eisenhower bore larger responsibility for the American "strategic synthesis," a formula shrewdly designed to combine military strength with long-term economic sustainability. As a fiscally conservative Republican conveniently draped in the mantle of wartime generalship, Eisenhower ensured adequate military spending but turned back internal requests for major defense increases with the warning that America might become a "garrison state." According to Friedberg, the long-term effect of this synthesis—over the length of the cold war, the portion of American GDP devoted to defense averaged a moderate but healthy 7.5 percent—was a posture strong enough to deter the Soviets yet not so robust either to drive toward general war or to run the American economy into the ground.

And there were other dividends. The eventual rejection of a state-centralized approach to defense planning—the spurning of ambitious industrial policy proposals, the use of private contractors rather than government arsenals to procure most weapons, the preservation of independent scientific and research communities in the face of pressure for government control—permitted the private sector to bring its own synergy to bear on the American defense effort. And this, in turn, encouraged broader evolutionary trends, driven especially by progress in technology, that likewise favored democracy.

Back in 1949, the former wartime science czar Vannevar Bush wrote prophetically:

> The philosophy that men live by determines the form in which their governments will be molded. Upon the form of their government depends their progress in utilizing the applications of science to raise their standard of living and in building their strength for possible war.

Bush, a conservative, understood that technology actually gave democracies certain strategic advantages—if only democracies could learn to be true to themselves.

THOUGH FRIEDBERG'S close analysis focuses on the period 1945-1960, it provides a framework that also illuminates subsequent events. It is noteworthy, for instance, that America's brief period of "unbridled statism"—the Great Society and Vietnam-war years under Lyndon Johnson—ushered in a period of protracted strategic eclipse. Ronald Reagan, of course, eventually managed to restore American strategic fortunes, but his inability or unwillingness to reconcile the strategic and antistatist sides of his program led to explosive budget deficits.

One could wish that Friedberg had provided more such comparative or historical examples to amplify his broader generalizations about the nature and strengths of democracy. But that is just a quibble with a truly estimable book. *In the Shadow of the Garrison State* helps us understand how American democracy brought us strategic success—and how that success can be sustained.

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This is a bad time to argue about whether or not we should have bombed the Serbs and placed troops in Kosova. It is an even worse time to talk about reducing the number of troops and resources we are willing to commit to the United Nations operation. Although Europe should handle security problems in its own backyard, it is not yet capable of doing so. Kosova is in crisis, and there is no alternative; the United States *must* contribute to its resolution. We accepted that responsibility when we bombed the Serbs and moved in NATO forces.

We occupied Kosova; now we need to help liberate it from chaos, violence, poverty, and maladministration. This means taking control of the province and—in cooperation with Kosovar Albanian and Serbian democrats—leading it in measured stages to independence. This also means taking resolute action against those who would disturb the peace, whether it is Serbian vigilantes in northern Mitrovica or Albanian "freedom fighters" (the UCPMB) in the Presevo Valley in southern Serbia, who receive weapons and supplies from eastern Kosova. Both groups must be disarmed and, if necessary, their leaders incarcerated.

We must shed the mythology, most recently expressed by NATO secretary-general Lord Robertson, that "we are rebuilding a multi-ethnic democracy in [Kosova]." Such a society never existed in Kosova in the first place, and now, after more than a decade of intense and bloody national struggle, including fierce Serbian ethnic cleansing campaigns in 1998–99, no such society can emerge.

Redrawing the boundaries of Kosova will only encourage demands for new boundaries all over the region. Partition holds the same dangers. Therefore, Kosova must eventually emerge as an independent country within its present borders. That means that the Serbs who are there have to be protected and that they must have internationally mandated access to their holy monasteries. But they must accommodate to a Kosovar Albanian state or leave, as many Kosovar Serbs already have. The same is true for the Albanians in the Presevo Valley: They must either live in Serbia in peace or leave on their own, again, as many already have. Under no circumstances, however, can ethnic cleansing be condoned or aided. Formal population transfers usually cause more problems than they solve.

Under Western tutelage, **an independent Kosova could help stabilize the region,** especially Macedonia and Albania. Large injections of capital from the European Union and the United States are endangered by the present uncertainty about Kosova's fate. A high-profile presence of NATO and the United States in Kosova might discourage Milosevic from his present attempts to destabilize Montenegro.

The Serbian loss of Kosova, legitimated by Milosevic's wanton aggression in the region, might also help the Serbian opposition remove him from power. The West could then reach out to Serbia to bring the country back to normalcy and its rightful place in the European community. Over the past decade, indecision in the Balkans has produced nothing but catastrophe.

— *Norman M. Naimark*

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